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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EZEKIEL.

Exposition

BY VERY REV. E. H. PLUMPTRE, D.D.,

LATE DEAN OF WELLS;

AND BY

REV. T. WHITELAW, D.D.

Homiletics

BY REV. PROFESSOR W. F. ADENEY, M.A.

Homilies by Various Authors.

REV. PROF. J. R. THOMSON, M.A.
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REV. W. JONES.
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THE

BOOK OF THE PROPHET EZEKIEL.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXII.

Vers. 1, 2.—**Moreover**, etc. The word connects what follows with the **word of the Lord** which began in ch. xx. 2. That connection is, indeed, sufficiently indicated by the recurrence of the formula, "Wilt thou judge?" (see note on ch. xx. 4). In obedience to the commands which that question implied, Ezekiel has once more to go through the catalogue of the sins of Judah and Jerusalem. It is not without significance that he applies the very epithet of **bloody city** (Hebrew, *city of bloods*) which Nahum (iii. 1) had applied to Nineveh.

Ver. 3.—**The city sheddeth blood**, etc. As in the great indictment of Isaiah (i. 15, 21; iv. 4), the sins of murder and idolatry are grouped together. She sins as if with the purpose "that her time" (*i.e.* the time of her punishment) "may come."

Ver. 4.—**Thou hast caused thy days to draw near**, etc. As in ver. 3, the days and the years are those of God's judgments. The people had made no effort to avert their doom by repentance. They had, as it were, rushed upon their appointed fate. So, though in another sense, the righteous lives of the faithful are said, in 2 Pet. iii. 12, to "hasten the coming of the day of God." Exceptional evil and exceptional good alike hasten the approach of the day which is to decide between the two.

Ver. 5.—**Those that be near**, etc. The Hebrew words are both feminine, and refer to the neighbouring and distant cities which took up their proverbs of reproach against the city, once holy and faithful, now **infamous** (Hebrew, *defiled in name*) and **much vexed**. The last words point to another form of punishment. Jerusalem is described as in a state of moral tumult and disorder as the consequence of its guilt (comp. Amos iii. 9; Deut. vii. 23; Zech. xiv. 13, where the same word is rendered by "tumults" and "destruction").

Ver. 6.—**Behold, the princes of Judah**, etc. For the "bloodshed," which was conspicuous among the sins, comp. ch. ix. 9; xvi. 38; xxiii. 37, 45; and for special instances of that sin among its princes, those of Manasseh (2 Kings xxi. 16) and Jehoiakim (2 Kings xxiv. 4). **To their power**; Hebrew, *each man according to his arm*, i.e. his strength. There was no restraint upon the doer of evil other than the limitation of his capacity.

Ver. 7.—We pass to sins of another kind. The fifth commandment was trampled underfoot as well as the sixth, and the blessing of continued national existence (Exod. xx. 12) was thereby forfeited. The widow and the orphan and the stranger (we note in that last word the width of Ezekiel's sympathies) were oppressed (compare the same grouping in Deut. xxvii. 16, 19).

Ver. 8.—**Mine holy things**, etc. The words take in the whole range of Divine ordinances as affecting both things and persons. (For "profaning sabbaths," see ch. xx. 16.)

Ver. 9.—**Men that carry tales**, etc. Hebrew, *men of slanders* (comp. Exod. xxiii. 1; Lev. xix. 16). The sin of the informers, ever ready to lend themselves to plots against the life or character of the innocent, was then, as at all times, the besetting evil of corrupt government in the East. Compare the story of Naboth (1 Kings xxi. 10) and of Jeremiah (Jer. xxxvii. 13). (For **eating on the mountains**, see note on ch. xviii. 6; and for **lewdness**, that on ch. xvi. 43.) What the lewdness consisted in is stated in the following verses.

Ver. 10.—This, well-nigh the vilest of all

forms of incest, against which the *horror naturalis* of the heathen, as in the story of Hippolytus, uttered its protest, would seem to have been common among the corruptions of Israel (Amos ii. 7; comp. 1 Cor. v. 1). (For the sin described in the second clause, see notes on ch. xviii. 6.)

Vers. 11, 12.—The list of sins follows on the lines of Lev. xviii. 9, 15. (For those in ver. 12, see notes on ch. xviii. 12.) It is to be remarked, however, that the prophet does not confine himself to the mere enumeration of specific sins. These are traced to their source in that "forgetting God" which was at once the starting-point and the consummation of all forms of evil (comp. Rom. i. 28).

Ver. 13.—**I have smitten my hand.** The gesture, as in ch. xxi. 14, 17, was one of indignant, and, as it were, impatient command.

Ver. 14.—**Can thine heart endure, etc.?** The question implies an answer in the negative. Heart would fail and hands wax feeble in the day of the Lord's judgment. The doom of exile and dispersion must come, with all its horrors; but even here, Judah was not, like Ammon, to be forgotten (ch. xxi. 32). Her punishment was to do its work, and to consume her filthiness out of her.

Ver. 16.—**Thou shalt take thine inheritance,** etc.; better, with the Revised Version, Keil, and most other commentators, *Thou shalt be profaned in thyself*, etc. The prophet is still speaking of punishment, not of restoration.

Ver. 18.—**The house of Israel is to me become dross,** etc. A new parable, based upon Isa. i. 22, 23 and Jer. vi. 30, begins, and is carried out with considerable fulness. In Mal. iii. 2, 3 we have the same imagery. Baser metals have been mingled with the silver, and must be burnt out, but there is hope, as well as terror, in the parable. Men throw the mixed metals into the smelting-pot in order that the silver may be separated from the dross and come out pure (comp. 1 Pet. i. 7). And this was to be the issue of the "fiery trial" through which Jerusalem and its inhabitants were to pass.

Vers. 23, 24.—A fresh section opens, and the prophet addresses himself, not to Jerusalem only, but to the whole land. **A land that is not cleansed.** The words admit of the rendering, *not shined upon*, and this is adopted by Keil. The land is deprived at once of the sunshine and the rain, which are the conditions of fertility. The LXX. gives "not rained upon," and so the two clauses are parallel and state the same fact. So Ewald. The Vulgate gives *immunda*, and this is followed both by the Authorized Version and the Revised Version (comp. Isa. v. 6; Amos iv. 7).

Ver. 25.—**A conspiracy of prophets.** The prophet's thoughts go back to ch. xiii. 1—16, from which, in ver. 28, he actually quotes. It is probable that, in the interval, fresh tidings had reached him of the evil work which they were doing at Jerusalem. The LXX. ἀφηγούμενοι (equivalent to "princes") suggests that they followed a different text, and this is adopted by Keil and Hitzig. **Like a roaring lion** (comp. ch. xix. 2, 3; 1 Pet. v. 8). The word probably points to the loud declamations of the false prophets (compare, as a striking parallel, Zeph. iii. 3, 4).

Ver. 26.—The sins of the prophets are followed by those of the priests. Their guilt was that they blurred over the distinction **between the holy and the profane** (Revised Version, "common"), **between the clean and the unclean** (comp. ch. xliv. 23; Lev. x. 10, where the same terms are used), in what we have learnt to call the positive and ceremonial ordinances of the Law, and so blunted their keenness of perception in regard to analogous moral distinctions. Extremes meet, and in our Lord's time the same result was brought about by an exaggerated scrupulosity about the very things the neglect of which was, in Ezekiel's time, the root of the evils which he condemns. This was true generally, conspicuously true in the case of the sabbath. Its neglect was a crying evil in Ezekiel's time, just as its exaggeration was in the later development of Judaism. Though in itself positive rather than moral, **to hide the eyes** from its holiness was, for those to whom the commandment had been given, an act of immorality.

Ver. 27.—**Wolves** (comp. Hab. i. 8; Zeph. iii. 3; Matt. vii. 15; Acts xx. 29).

Ver. 28.—(See ch. xiii. 10.) The fact that the prophets are addressed here gives some force to the idea that "chiefs" or "judges" were addressed in ver. 27.

Ver. 29.—From the classes, the prophet turns to the masses. The people of the land, the common people (2 Kings xxv. 3, 19), come under the same condemnation. Greed of gain, the oppression of the poor and the stranger, were seen everywhere.

Ver. 30.—**And I sought for a man,** etc. (For the imagery that follows, see ch. xiii. 5; Ps. cvi. 23.) The fact stated, as in Jer. v. 1, is that there was no one in all Jerusalem righteous enough to be either a defender or an intercessor, none to be a "repairer of the breach" (Isa. lviii. 12). Nothing was left but the righteous punishment proclaimed in ver. 31.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 7.—*Social sins.* The wickedness of Jerusalem was not confined to what might be called sins of religion—idolatry, sabbath-breaking, profanation of sacred things, etc. It was witnessed in gross outrages of social rights. Failure in religion leads to failure in society. Social wrongs are sins in the sight of Heaven which God observes, condemns, and punishes.

I. LOSS OF FILIAL REVERENCE. "They have set light by father and mother." The Hebrew Law attached great weight to the duty children owe to their parents (Exod. xx. 12). The requirement to honour father and mother was "the first commandment with promise" (Eph. vi. 2). The breach of this law was a sin in the sight of God; so the prodigal son confessed that he had sinned against Heaven (Luke xv. 21). Christ condemned the mean devices by which some Jews in his day endeavoured to escape from their filial duty (Matt. xv. 4—6). In this respect, the East, which we often despise for its supposed corruption and barbarism, is in advance of the West. One of the most ominous portents among us is a growing levity in the treatment of parental claims. No doubt it is well that the old stiffness of the family relationship has broken down, and that there is more mutual confidence between parents and children than there was in the olden times. Parental tyranny is no more admirable than filial rebellion. The formal manners which separated the older generation from the younger were hurtful to both. But with a fuller recognition of the rights of the young, and a greater freedom of intercourse between the older and the younger members of a family, we are in danger of losing filial reverence—one of the most sacred of duties. Well might King Lear exclaim—

> "Sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
> To have a thankless child"!

II. OPPRESSION OF THE STRANGER. Many and merciful were the regulations of the Jewish Law in favour of "the stranger that is within thy gates." In spite of the supposed Jewish exclusiveness—a trait of late Judaism rather than of ancient Israelite manners—the foreigner had a higher status in Jerusalem than was accorded by the liberal-minded Greeks at Athens to the *Xenoi*. Oppression of foreign residents was a sign of peculiar wickedness. The Jews were reminded that because they had been received as guests in Egypt and then betrayed by their hosts, they should feel peculiar sympathy with aliens. Let us beware of selfish national exclusiveness. This is not patriotism; it is narrow-minded, selfish injustice and inhumanity. Observe some of the cases in which the sin of oppressing strangers may be committed. 1. *Unkindness to foreign immigrants.* England is the boasted shelter of the world's refugees. May she never forfeit her good name from greedy jealousy! Missions to Italian pedlars, lodging-houses for Lascars, etc., claim Christian attention for the saving of the poor and friendless from cruel wrong. 2. *Cruelty to foreigners abroad.* England has vast relations with feeble inferior races. The great empire of India is entrusted to our care. In Africa we have peculiar influence. The abominations of the treatment of women in the former case, and the evil of the traffic in drink and fire-arms in the latter case, are instances of gross oppression of strangers.

III. VEXING THE FATHERLESS AND THE WIDOW. In the absence of a poor law, special attention was given to the provision for orphans and widows by private charity under the Jewish economy. But the rough justice of the East often failed to secure to the helpless even their own rights. Times of lawlessness were times when those poor persons suffered grievously. There is always a danger that the helpless should be trodden down in the fierce race of life. We cannot excuse such cruelty by quoting Adam Smith and Mill, as though the laws of political economy were sacred mandates or decrees of fate, instead of being simply generalizations of conduct prompted by self-interest. We are called to higher aims—to sympathy and mutual helpfulness.

Ver. 13.—*Dishonest gain.* I. DISHONEST GAIN IS A COMMON SOURCE OF WEALTH. We set before our children, in their copy-books, the motto, "Honesty is the best policy;" but in the experience of life it is found that dishonesty is often a more successful worldly policy. Thieves fatten on their booty, and swindlers live in lordly palaces. There is

not only the vulgar dishonesty that steals by direct robbery. We have our civilized and refined dishonesty—a dishonesty which contrives to keep on the near side of the law, and yet is not the less real theft. The "sweater" is a thief. The promoter of bubble companies is a robber on a colossal scale. The breadth of the area embraced, the number of the dupes victimized, and the amount of the gain realized, do not destroy the guilt of the robbery; they heighten it. There was a certain frank daring about the old highwaymen which entitled them to the respect of those who condemned their lawlessness, in comparison with which the sneaking dishonesty of those who steal without risking their lives or liberties is a despicable cowardice.

II. DISHONEST GAIN IS GOT BY MURDEROUS CRUELTY. In our text Ezekiel associates dishonest gain with blood-guiltiness. The thief is near to becoming a murderer; the burglar carries fire-arms. The immense growth of the custom of insuring the lives of young babies, together with the frightful extent of infant mortality, forces us to the conclusion that, either by neglect—the cruellest kind of murder—or by the more merciful means of direct suffocation, numbers of children are yearly slaughtered by their parents for the sake of the paltry gain obtained from the insurance. We cannot say much of the old pagan habit of exposing children while this more vile, because more cunning and mercenary, crime is commonly committed in Christian England. It is the duty of all good citizens to be on the watch for cases of cruelty to children among their neighbours—often practised in the decent homes of thrifty folk. In other ways theft may mean murder—slow murder of the most painful kind. The customer helps to murder the shopkeeper when he takes an unjust advantage of competition. He who steals a man's livelihood virtually steals his life, for it is no credit to the thief that his victim may be saved from starvation by the charity of others.

III. DISHONEST GAIN CALLS DOWN THE VENGEANCE OF HEAVEN. God has smitten his hand at it. Dishonesty can only appear the best policy for a season. In the long run the old proverb is certain to justify itself. 1. *National dishonesty will bring vengeance on a nation.* The English cotton-trade has suffered materially through the cheating custom of adding weight to goods shipped to the East by sizing the fabric. If trade with lower races is corrupt, unjust, and cruel, the wrong will be avenged either by the loss of the trade or in the hatred earned by the traders. The oppression of the poor in our midst by those who make dishonest gains in grinding down their *employés* will be assuredly avenged by some awful social revolution, unless the injustice is speedily atoned for by more fair treatment. 2. *Private dishonesty will bring vengeance on the sinner.* God sees and judges the man who enjoys dishonest gain. If he does not suffer on earth from the enmity he has stirred, this Dives will certainly not be carried with the Lazarus he oppressed to Abraham's bosom. His gold will scorch him like fire in some dread hell.

Ver. 14.—*A total collapse.* I. DELUSIVE HOPE. Consider what it rests on. 1. *A stout heart.* The sinner believes in himself. He feels brave and confident. No doubt this temper of mind will help him over a number of difficulties. But will it stand in the awful day of Divine judgment? 2. *Strong hands.* The sinner is conscious of strength in himself and in his possessions, in his body and mind, and in the resources of his ill-gotten gain. The wicked king owns his army; the bad millionaire holds his money; the sinful man of humbler pretensions relies on his wits, his energy, or at worst on his luck. 3. *Present prosperity.* The text refers to future days, when God will deal with the sinner. Those days have not yet dawned, and all is fair at present. The natural tendency is to believe that the world will continue as it is now. "For as in the days that were before the Flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark" (Matt. xxiv. 38).

II. CERTAIN FAILURE. The text is in the form of a question, but it plainly suggests only one dismal answer. The delusive hope must fail. Note the grounds of the certain failure. 1. *Human feebleness.* It is a case of the strength of man matched against the might of God. Who can doubt the issue? In such a contest the stoutest heart must fail and the strongest arm go down. Man is the lord of creation; but he is a feeble insect before Omnipotence. 2. *Divine constancy.* "I the Lord have spoken it, and will do it." God is true to his word. He does not mock his children with idle threats. He is too sure to fail. 3. *Changed circumstances.* "In the days that I shall deal with

thee." Those days have not yet arrived. Therefore we cannot comfort ourselves that we shall be safe in the future because we are comfortable enough at present. The coming days will wear a new aspect. We are not fortified against winter storms by the enjoyment of summer sunshine. The ease with which we glide down the stream is no guarantee that the thunder of the falls will never be reached. The delusive hope which shines fair in the old times of Divine waiting will be shattered to fragments in the new days of Divine judgment.

III. CONSEQUENT MISERY. The question of the text is not answered; but the doleful silence with which it is received suggests the misery that is to follow. If heart and hand fail, the ruin and wretchedness must be complete. While a good man fighting against adversity is said to be a sight for the admiration of gods as well as men, a bad man crushed by misery is only an object of horror. The stout heart of honest intentions can bear up against unmerited woes and find in its own fortitude a certain solace. But this solace will be wanting in the collapse of the false hope of the sinner. Then will follow the deepest misery, the sense of being confounded, the helplessness of being swept away in a flood of destruction. Pain is not the worst evil. The depth of hell is reached when heart and strength fail, and the sinner loses all power to withstand his fate. Hence the supreme need of a Saviour (Rom. viii. 1).

Vers. 18—22.—*Dross.* I. THE NATURE OF THE DROSS. Israel is compared to dross. The nation should have been God's precious metal, pure white silver. By sin it has become base metal. 1. *Dross is an inferior substance.* Characters are deteriorated by sin. Wickedness lowers the very nature of a man. We cannot commit sin and still keep our persons in primitive worth and dignity. We are either exalted or degraded by our deeds; they react upon our very being and assimilate it to themselves. Thus silver becomes dross; the man made in the image of God becomes a child of the devil (John viii. 44). 2. *Dross may be of various kinds.* There are brass, tin, iron, and lead in the furnace. Yet all are counted as dross. In human life there are various types of evil. Vice is more picturesque than virtue because it is more variegated. But one common stamp is on every evil coin—the same diabolical effigy. 3. *Dross is in the place of good metal.* It is mixed with silver (ver. 20). Moreover, it pretends to be the good metal. Brass would pass as gold, and tin as silver. Sin is generally hypocritical. It craves the honour of goodness. Wheat and tares grow together. Good and bad fishes come to land in one net. Society contains the good and the bad in close association.

II. THE EVIL OF THE DROSS. 1. *It is directly hurtful.* Brass is poisonous. Tin is soft, and the vessel made with it will stand neither the heat nor the wear which silver is capable of enduring. All the base metals readily corrode, while the precious metals can be kept bright. The dross of bad character is poisonous, and a source of weakness and corrosion to society. 2. *It is deceptive.* Passing itself off as better metal, it succeeds in taking the place of honour that does not belong to it. Deceitful men worm their way into posts of dignity which they degrade by their evil character. 3. *It is injurious to the good metal.* The choice silver is lost in the dross when the various metals are amalgamated into one lump. Good men are injured by bad companions. The presence of wicked characters hinders the work of the good who are joined with them in a common enterprise.

III. THE TREATMENT OF THE DROSS. 1. *God deals with it.* We cannot always detect its presence or distinguish between it and good metal. Both tares and wheat are to be let grow together until the harvest (Matt. xiii. 30). God knows the secrets of all hearts. The great Assayer will not be deceived by the most specious forgery. 2. *God tries it in the furnace.* Israel was to go into the furnace of affliction, that the dross might be detected. In her prosperity and confidence she listened to the prophets of smooth things, who flattered her into the notion that she was a choice nation of rare quality—pure silver compared to the base metal of the Gentile world. The Captivity tried this boast. Not only was the land laid waste and the city of Jerusalem destroyed, but the mass of the Jewish nation proved itself unequal to cope with its difficulties, and, failing to retain its distinctive character, melted away into the neighbouring nations, leaving only a remnant—the true silver—to carry on the Hebrew tradition and earn the right of restoration. Persecution would show how much worldly dross there is in the Church (Matt. xiii. 21). Trouble reveals the dross of individual souls.

Ver. 26.—*Holy and profane.* I. THE TRUE DISTINCTION BETWEEN HOLY AND PROFANE. The Jewish Law made elaborate distinctions between the clean and the unclean, some of which were founded on moral differences, some on sanitary requirements, but others on merely symbolical and ceremonial points. Many of these distinctions were only temporary, as that between certain foods, and that between Jews and Gentiles, the abolition of which was revealed to St. Peter in his vision at Joppa (Acts x. 15). Christ denounced the folly of formal distinctions (Matt. xv. 11). St. Paul claimed large liberty in this respect, and pointed out the danger and delusion of the will-worship which was associated with too punctilious an observance of minute external distinctions (Col. ii. 23). Nevertheless, there remain true distinctions apart from the formal and ceremonial differences. 1. *The distinction between holiness and sin.* In this distinction we have the root out of which the ceremonial notions of cleanness and uncleanness sprang. The formal notions may pass, the moral foundation is eternal. 2. *The distinction between the service of God and the service of the world.* We do not want to regard the temple as the only sacred place, so that the forum must be relegated to profanity. In the Christian age, "Holiness unto the Lord" is not only to be inscribed on the bells of the high priest; it is to be seen on the bells of the horses (Zech. xiv. 20). But this means a dedication of all to the service of God. If we neglect that service and sink into secularism, we fail to observe the holiness; we then make all things profane—temple as well as forum.

II. THE SIN OF DESTROYING THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN SACRED AND PROFANE. We have not now to do with definite Jewish offences against the Law of Moses, in which the finely drawn distinction between the clean and the unclean is disregarded. Sacred things of the temple were desecrated by the insolent heathen at Belshazzar's feast, but they had been first desecrated by Jews in the house of God, while they were touched with sinful hands and used without holy motives. They who are most careful to keep up the ceremonial distinction may yet profane sacred things. 1. The *sabbath* is profaned, not only when the shops are open and when crowds throng the public resorts of amusement, but when the congregations at church play the part of ostentatious Pharisees, and mock God with pretentious prayers while their hearts and thoughts are far from him. 2. The *Bible* is profaned when it is quoted to prop up a private opinion in disregard to the royal rights of truth. 3. The *gospel* is profaned when it is preached for the sake of winning popularity or raising money, to the neglect of the claims of Christ and the needs of mankind. 4. The *conscience*, which should be a holy standard of right, is profaned when it is distorted by casuistry into excusing a lack of integrity. 5. The *body* is profaned when, instead of being a temple of the Holy Ghost, it is an instrument of sin (1 Cor. vi. 15). 6. The *Church*, which should be the bride of the Lamb, is profaned when she sinks into worldly living or is divided against herself in bitter uncharitableness.

Ver. 30.—*A man to stand in the gap.* The nation of the Jews is in a desperate condition. Their defence is broken down, and God is ready to rush in through the breach with devastating vengeance. But he is loth to do so, and, though his is the threatening power, yet in a wonderful clemency God looks for some one to fill the gap and so to save the devoted nation. Unhappily, no such man is to be found.

I. THE BREACH IS MADE. The Jews have been already beaten in the war with Babylon. In the corresponding experience of souls the same lamentable condition is observable. The sinner sets himself against God with a brazen face, and makes the stoutest fence of worldly precautions wherewith to protect himself. But alas! this is a feeble structure. We have not to wait long before we discover that it has been broken through. Trouble has come. Misfortune has fallen on the self-complacent sinner. Or it may be he has suffered from severe sickness, that has weakened the energies of his body. Possibly his mental faculties have begun to fail. He receives unpleasant warning of his mortality. There is a breach in his hedge.

II. GOD IS PREPARING TO COME THROUGH THE BREACH. He cannot disregard the sins of his people, for he is their King, and he must act justly. He might even make a breach at any moment, and in the awful crash of judgment sweep away the strongest fortifications of the soul as so much dust and rubbish. Much more, then, must the enfeebled soul, with ruined fences, stand open to the irresistible wrath of God! So long

as we live in sin we are inviting God to come in vengeance through the ever-widening breaches in our paltry defences.

III. GOD WISHES THE BREACH TO BE FILLED. Here is the wonderful part of our subject. Though we deserve God's vengeance, he is reluctant to wreak it upon us. While he is necessarily preparing to smite the sinner, he longs to spare him. When the soul is indifferent to its own danger, God grieves over it and looks out for a way of escape. God now longs to save us before we think of seeking for our deliverance.

IV. A MAN IS NEEDED TO FILL THE BREACH. The Jews cannot do this for themselves. They do not see their danger, or they are too busily engaged upon the walls, or no one among them is strong and brave enough to take so perilous a position. We cannot mend the breach in our own lives. We cannot fortify our own souls against the wrath of God.

V. NO MAN IS FOUND TO FILL THE BREACH. Jeremiah might have seemed the most likely saviour in this time of extreme need; but even that great prophet was not able to stand alone against the inrushing army of vengeance. No man can save his neighbour from sin and ruin. The evil of the world is too great for all the good men in it to resist. The case of man is hopeless if it is left only to his fellow-man to save him.

VI. GOD HAS SENT HIS SON TO FILL THE BREACH. God looked to see if there was any to save, and wondered that there was no man. Then his own arm brought salvation. 1. Christ came *as a man*. A man was wanted. God coming in wrath against mankind must be met by a representative man. 2. Christ came *into the world*. He stood in the breach and met the fury of the storm. He was "made sin for us," and faced the curse of the cross. 3. Christ came *in the might of God*.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—*The reproach of Jerusalem.* Patriot as he was, Ezekiel was not, like some sincere patriots, blind to his country's faults. His conscience and judgment were enlightened, and his emotional nature was rendered especially sensitive, so that a just and deep impression was made upon his mind by the contemplation of his countrymen's errors and iniquities. Leaders of public opinion, teachers of the time, are ever in danger of flattering those among whom their lot is cast, with whom their interests are identified. Yet Ezekiel proves himself to have the true spirit of the prophet, who rises superior to this temptation, and whose motto is, "Be just, and fear not!"

I. THE REASONS FOR REPROACH EXISTING IN THE MORAL CONDITION OF THE INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM. The catalogue of the people's sins is both a long and an awful one. It suffices to mention these as boldly charged upon them by the faithful prophet of the Lord. 1. Idolatry. 2. Violence and murder. 3. Disregard of parents. 4. Oppression of strangers, of the widows and fatherless. 5. Profanation of the sabbath. 6. Lewdness and vile indulgence of lust. 7. Bribery. 8. Extortion. Was ever such an indictment brought against a community? The marvel is, not that the threatened judgment came, but that it was so long delayed.

II. THE REPROACH AS BROUGHT BY MEN AGAINST THE INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM. It certainly seems strange, all but incredible, that the highly favoured Jerusalem should be famed among the very heathen for degradation in iniquity and moral debasement. But the language of Ezekiel is explicit; and he would be more likely to soften than to exaggerate the charge. Jerusalem a reproach, a mocking, infamous, defiled, full of tumult! How are the mighty fallen! The city of the great King, the seat of the temple of Jehovah, the home of the consecrated priesthood,—infamous among the surrounding idolaters for flagitious violation of those very moral laws which the city was consecrated to conserve!

III. THE REPROACH BROUGHT BY GOD AGAINST THE INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM. The simple dignity of the Divine reproach is beyond all rhetoric, all denunciation. "Thou hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God." Here, indeed, was the real secret of the defection and rebellion, of the vices and crimes of the sons of Israel. Had they kept Jehovah in memory, they would have kept themselves free from the errors and the follies into which they fell. After all that the Lord had done for them, after all

his forbearance and long-suffering, they nevertheless forgot him! There was but one hope for Jerusalem, but one way of recovery and restoration—that they should bring again to memory him whom they had not only forsaken, but forgotten.—T.

Vers. 13—22.—*The dross in the furnace.* God's mercy and kindness scarcely anywhere appear more manifest than in his method of dealing with his erring people, whom he subjects to chastening and discipline with the view of purging away their faults. The figure employed by Ezekiel in this passage occurs in other of the prophetic writings. There is some obscurity in his expression; for it seems as if, to convey the fulness of his meaning, he represents the people first as dross, and then as the metal from which the dross is burnt away. Perhaps his meaning is that the ore which is smelted contains a very large proportion of dross compared with the genuine metal.

I. THE VALUE WHICH THE LORD ASSIGNS TO JUDAH. This is very qualified. There is, indeed, metal, whether more precious as silver or less so as iron. Yet there is much that is worthless; so that the Lord says, "Ye are all become dross." The inference is that, however there may be latent some possibility of good, this can only become actual after the subjection of it to much discipline.

II. THE TREATMENT TO WHICH THE LORD SUBJECTS JUDAH. The ore is gathered, cast into the furnace, left there, to be blown upon by the blast of indignation, and subjected to the heat of the fire, until it be melted in the midst thereof. Through such a process must Judah pass before God could take pleasure therein. Siege, suffering, privation, pestilence, famine, decimation, captivity, reproach, mockery,—such were the sufferings appointed for the people of Jerusalem. And, as a matter of fact and history, God did not spare Jerusalem—favoured though the city had been. He poured out his fury upon it, and for a time and for a purpose withheld from it his clemency and compassion.

III. THE UTTER INCAPACITY AND HELPLESSNESS OF JUDAH TO RESIST OR TO ENDURE WHAT THE LORD APPOINTS. This is expressed very powerfully in ver. 14, "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?" We are reminded of the inquiry, "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire." The discipline of God's justice is enough to overcome and break down the hard and obdurate hearts of men. They cannot accept it with equanimity. They must profit by it or be consumed by it.

IV. THE PURPOSE OF THE LORD'S SEVERE TREATMENT OF JUDAH. Ammon was cast into the fire, to be consumed into smoke and to vanish away; Judah, in order to refinement and purification. The intention of Eternal Wisdom and Goodness was and ever is that the dross may be consumed in the furnace of affliction and trial, and thus that the pure metal may be brought forth fit for the use and for the pleasure of the Most High.—T.

Vers. 23—31.—*Common corruption of all classes.* To complete the picture of the debasement and moral deterioration of Jerusalem, the prophet reviews the several classes of which the population of a great city is composed. He finds in every class signs of departure from God, signs of abandonment to the vices and crimes which prevailed among the heathen around.

I. THE PROPHETS, WHO SHOULD SPEAK GOD'S TRUTH, DECEIVE AND LIE, AND THUS MISLEAD THE PEOPLE. In what sense these worthless deceivers could have been called prophets, it is not easy to determine. Probably they were persons who pretended to this office, and who were deemed by their neighbours entitled to the appellation. But a prophet is one who speaks for God as his representative; and of all men deception on his part is reprehensible. Prophets are nothing if not true. Yet in how many cases have the multitude been misled by crafty, designing pretenders to Divine illumination! And not the multitude only, but even kings and commanders have too often given themselves over to the virtual dictation of men no better than soothsayers and diviners.

II. THE PRIESTS, WHO SHOULD KEEP AND REVERENCE THE DIVINE LAW, VIOLATE AND PROFANE IT. The priesthood must be regarded as part of a system, the object of which was to maintain right relations between the Almighty Ruler and his chosen people. Themselves divinely instituted, they were peculiarly bound to observe every

ordinance and regulation of Heaven. Yet these are the men whom the inspired prophet of the Lord denounces as doing violence to God's Law, profaning holy things, as breaking down the distinction between clean and unclean—a distinction which it was especially their office to maintain. How should they be clean who bear the vessels of the Lord! "Like priest, like people." The moral degradation of the priesthood promoted the degeneration of the nation.

III. THE PRINCES, WHO SHOULD PROTECT THEIR SUBJECTS AND PROMOTE THEIR WELFARE, RAVIN, SPOIL, AND DESTROY. Judah had been afflicted with a succession of monarchs who did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. The deeper the nation sank in poverty, humiliation, and despondency, the greater the opportunity for those in authority, by self-denial and sympathy, to improve the state of the nation. But the wretched rulers who found themselves in place and power appeared indifferent to everything except their own selfish interests, and did their worst to hasten and to complete the ruin which was manifestly so near.

IV. THE PEOPLE, WHO SHOULD LIVE IN THE EXERCISE OF JUSTICE, SYMPATHY, AND CONCORD, OPPRESS AND ROB THEIR NEIGHBOURS. National life may be, and is in many cases, an opportunity for the display of civic and social virtues. But the abuse of the best of institutions may make them evil. It is the spirit in which the life of the nation is lived which determines the condition of the people. Differences in power, intelligence, and wealth always have existed, and always will exist, in every community. But superiority ought to be regarded as a trust to be employed for the public good. Where it is used for purposes of oppression, especially for the oppression of the poor and the stranger, such a state of things is a sure presage of national downfall. "When all men live like brothers," a nation may defy a public enemy, a foreign foe. But suspicion and discord lay the axe at the root of the tree.

Such being the state of Jerusalem and Judah, all classes striving together as it were for the nation's ruin, no wonder that to the prophet the outlook appeared gloomy, and the day of retribution near at hand. "I sought," says Jehovah, "for a man among them, that should make up the fence, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none."—T.

Vers. 1—16.—*The prophet on the judgment-seat.* As among men there occurs, now and again, a great assize, when flagitious deeds are examined and flagrant offenders judged, so God has his seasons when high-handed crime is arrested, and the offenders feel the reality of Divine justice. Penalties are not awarded in the dark. Good men see clearly the equity of the proceeding and the extreme patience of the Judge. God places his doings in the public light.

I. THE INDICTMENT. It is a long indictment, and embraces all classes of people. 1. *Gross abuse of power.* The princes—*i.e.* heads of tribes—used their power for the destruction of life, not to preserve it. The sceptre was turned into a dagger. Even neglect to protect innocent life becomes murder. 2. *Idolatry.* "The city maketh idols against herself." In Israel idolatry was treason. It was the rejection and humbling of their proper King. 3. *Murder.* "The city sheddeth blood." He who begins to despise God soon learns to under-value human life. Their children were made to pass through the fire. Violence against property and life abounded. 4. *Filial disobedience.* "In thee have they set light by father and mother." The slaughter of innocent children soon produced its natural fruit. Children grew up without natural affection. If the central sun be destroyed, the planets will soon rush headlong to mutual destruction. 5. *Tyranny.* "They have dealt by oppression with the stranger: they have vexed the fatherless and the widow." All regard for humane virtues, for common morality, had vanished. It is the custom throughout the East to show hospitality to strangers. This is considered a virtue of the first order; yet even this ordinary virtue was trampled underfoot. 6. *Profanity.* "Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths." In Israel this was a most flagrant sin. God had given them tokens of his presence and favour which he had not given unto others; therefore to profane these sacred tokens was to disgrace God in the eyes of the surrounding heathen. It was as if a soldier on the battle-field trailed his country's flag in the mire. It was as if a married woman should fling her wedding-ring into the fire. 7. *Murderous intrigues.* "Men carry tales to shed blood." Untruthfulness is a common sin among the Orientals.

Lying intrigues, to encompass a rival's death, are plentiful as haws. This sin the Hebrews had copied from their neighbours. 8. *Unchastity and adultery.* "They commit lewdness." The sanctity of the marriage-tie disappeared. Virtuous affection was strangled by animal lust. Incest and other abominations followed. The people gradually sank to the level of the beasts. All the special dignity and nobleness of manhood died out. Degradation of humanity spread. 9. *Judicial bribery.* "They have taken gifts to shed blood." Not an upright judge remained. Wickedness, like an epidemic, spread and infected every office and every rank. The fountain of justice became a fountain of corruption and death. 10. *Avarice.* There were gains that were dishonest. Extortion was on every side. Avarice, like a cancer, had eaten out all the healthy flesh of honour and sincerity. Gold became to them a god. 11. *Forgetfulness of God.* This was the root and the crown of their sins. The very memory which God created refused to entertain him; as if a house which a man himself had built should shut its doors against him. When God is driven out, all his retinue—purity, strength, unity, peace, honour—go with him. This is a long and dismal catalogue of crimes.

II. THE ASSIZE-DAY. "Thou hast caused thy days to draw near." 1. *This assize is certain.* "I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it." As surely as night succeeds to day, the reckoning-day of God's justice comes. It has never yet failed. Neither the man nor the nation that has defied God has on any occasion escaped. 2. *The proceeding will be strictly equitable.* The people had made alliance with the gods of the heathen, therefore among the heathen shall they dwell. 3. *The irresistibleness of God's judicial act.* "Can thine hands be strong in the day that I shall deal with thee?" From his bar there is no appeal. Against his power it is vain to strive.

III. THE VERDICT. "Thou shalt show her all her abominations." Here is threatened: 1. *Self-discovery.* All sin has a subtle potency to blind the judgment. Men are prone to measure themselves only by others, or to look at their conduct only in the mirror of their neighbours' conduct. But when the clear light of eternal truth flashes upon the soul, past sins start into gigantic magnitude; they are like mountains for their size. 2. *Public shame.* "Therefore I have made thee a reproach unto the heathen." This is a stinging verdict. Even the heathen, so much more barbarous and degraded than were the Hebrews aforetime, shall now reproach them for their flagitious deeds. The fall is all the greater if we have first climbed to some stupendous height. 3. *Overwhelming affliction.* "Can thine heart endure in the days that I shall deal with thee?" When Cain felt the full stress of his sentence, he cried out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" The just wrath of the Creator: how can frail man endure it? 4. *Banishment.* "I will disperse thee . . . in the countries." In the same measure in which the Hebrews had been confident and boastful in their own land, was the gravamen of the sentence that scattered them among many nations. To be shut out from one's own land and home is a heavy stroke. 5. *Abandonment.* "Thou shalt take thine inheritance *in thyself.*" In other words, thou shalt shift for thyself: thou shalt find no good beyond thyself. When men persist in saying to God, "Depart from me!" God will say to them, "Depart from me!" To be left to ourselves is heaviest doom.

IV. THE ULTIMATE DESIGN. "I will consume thy filthiness out of thee." 1. *Purification.* This abandonment is only for a time. When penalty and suffering have accomplished their end, God promised to return to them in mercy. Meanwhile, alas! many would be cut off by death. Only a remnant would partake of the distant grace. So it came to pass. The seventy years' banishment purged out effectually the spirit of idolatry. It was a severe, yet a successful, remedy! 2. *Surrender.* "Thou shalt know that I am the Lord." This knowledge would be not only intellectual, but practical. It was a knowledge of God as Supreme King and Judge. It was a knowledge that produced fruits of obedience. "A burnt child dreads the fire:" so the painful experiences through which that generation passed left wholesome effects upon their children. Full surrender is the only safety.—D.

Vers. 17—22.—*The smelting furnace.* For every material thing there is a test. We may know metals by their action under chemical agents, or by the furnace-flame. We can test gases by their power to sustain life or to sustain flame. We can test dynamical forces by electricity or by their power to create motion. So for human character there is a crucial test.

I. ADULTERATED METAL. The seed of Israel had sadly degenerated. They had been, compared with other people, as silver and gold. Now they were, in God's esteem, only as dross, and "his judgment is according to truth." What virgin gold is in a human kingdom, true righteousness is in the kingdom of God. Loyalty and love are the coins current in God's empire. A good man is worth more than argosies of gold and rubies. Wisdom, righteousness, and love,—*these* are the only durable riches. They exalt and enrich men for time and for eternity. Selfishness, disobedience, and rebellion are the dross and rust which eat out the very life of the soul. Real riches become part and parcel of the man.

II. THE FURNACE-FIRE. What the material flame of the furnace is to metals, God's anger is to human character. It tests the qualities of mind and heart. As metals have no power to resist being cast into the furnace, neither has any man power to exempt himself from Divine chastisement. It comes upon all in some form or other. In some, humility, submission, resignation, appear. These are precious metals—the gold and silver of moral excellence. In others, fretfulness, remorse, defiance, are the effect. These are base dross, destitute of any worth. A myriad of men know nothing about their characters until trial, in some sort, comes upon them. If milder forms of chastisement will not melt the hardened metal, the anger of Jehovah will wax hot. There shall be, sooner or later, self-revelation—the sooner the better.

III. SEPARATION. The furnace is not merely a test of metal and alloy; it further separates the one from the other. Among men this separation, resulting from God's visitations, is twofold. 1. This separation is seen as one between man and man. The precious and the vile become more distinguishable one from the other. 2. The separation is internal. In those who turn the affliction to good account there follows self-inspection, self-denial, pruning. The idol is dethroned. The vice is abandoned. The evil is withstood and fought. Refinement goes on within. The darkness and the light separate. The man comes out of the process as gold that is purified.

IV. DESTRUCTION. The residuum of alloy is cast out as base and worthless. God will not tolerate falsehood, hypocrisy, or any iniquity in his kingdom. "Every liar shall have his portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." The liar is not only the man who speaks with intention to deceive; he is the man who has preferred to deceive himself rather than face the truth. Unquestionably, separation, accomplished in the furnace, is with a view to refinement, but also with a view of destruction to the worthless dross. Every man has his face either toward purity or toward perdition. The processes of God's furnace are going on among us every day. Are we getting better or worse?—D.

Vers. 23—31.—*Highest rank among men not sought.* The development of human civilization demands an organized system. Men require to be classified according to their ability and fitness to contribute to the welfare of the whole. For the public benefit there must be ruler and subject, master and servant, teacher and taught, commander and army. Each, according to his office, has duties and obligations, the neglect of which brings instant loss and distant ruin.

I. OFFICIAL RANK HAS DEFINITE RESPONSIBILITIES. We cannot hold any office nor possess any wealth without incurring corresponding obligation. There is force in the French proverb, "Noblesse oblige!" Although the sovereign may be above written law, it is only for expediency's sake, and certainly he is under law, equally binding, though not expressed in words. Every person holding office of whatever sort or kind has undertaken a definite responsibility to protect or promote certain interests of the people. He may be responsible for social order, or for immunity against invaders, or for advancement of learning, or for development of wealth, or for the maintenance of religion. But some responsibility springs out of his office.

II. HIGH RANK DOES NOT SECURE HIGH CHARACTER. Character may and does qualify for office; but official position does not generate moral character. High rank has special temptations and special perils. Rank is only a change of situation; office is simply a change of occupation. They involve changes only outside the man; they do not touch or purify his real self. A man may be an apostle, and yet be harbouring a demon in his heart. A man may be a prophet, yet need himself to be taught.

III. RANK HAS A CROWD OF IMITATORS AMONG INFERIOR ORDERS. Because the

princes, priests, and prophets acted basely in Israel, therefore the "people of the land used oppression and exercised robbery" (ver. 29). Vice is more contagious than fever. Rank gives artificial importance to its possessor, and exerts extensive influence either for evil or for good. As a monument attracts the notice of human eyes in proportion to the elevation on which it is raised, so according to the station in society a man occupies he will have more or fewer imitators. Wide influence is a perilous possession.

IV. THE HIGHEST RANK IS NOT DESIRED AMONG MEN. "I sought for a man who should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none." Real and thorough reform is always unpopular. Men are often eager to reform their institutions or their laws, but always backward to reform themselves. A faithful prophet, who shall recall the people back to God, has always been a scarce man. Nor is this the only time in which God expressed his surprise that no intercessor for men could be found. Yet this is the noblest office any man can occupy. Its aim is the very loftiest. It brings man into companionship with God. Its fruits are permanent, yea, eternal. Alongside this order of service every other rank pales into insignificance. A mediator is a peerless man!

V. THE INFLUENCE OF ONE MAN MAY BE ENORMOUS. Had one real man been found to reprove the people, restore religious worship, and plead with God, Israel might have been spared its overthrow. One man may save a nation or plunge it into perdition. Paul, on board ship, obtained the lives of all the crew. The intercession of Moses brought a deed of pardon for the Hebrew host. For David's sake God conferred large favours on the nation. Luther's firm faith brought deliverance both spiritual and temporal to all Europe. What one man can do no language can portray, imagination can scarce conceive. A man of wisdom, piety, and faith may quietly revolutionize the world.—D.

Vers. 1—16.—*An appalling indictment and a just judgment.* "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Now, thou son of man, wilt thou judge, wilt thou judge the bloody city?" etc. "This chapter," says Fairbairn, "stands closely related to the last chapter, and may fitly be regarded as supplementary to it; the former having presented a striking delineation of the Lord's purpose to execute the severity of his displeasure upon the people of Jerusalem, while this returns to lay open the fearful mass of corruption on account of which such severity was to be inflicted. In what is written here there is nothing properly new; in its general purport it is a repetition of the charges which were urged in ch. xx.; and so the chapter begins much in the same way—with a call upon the prophet to judge the people, and set before them their iniquities. There, however, the charge took the form of an historical review for the purpose of connecting the present state of wickedness with the past, and showing how continuously the stream of corruption had flowed through all periods of their national existence. Here, on the other hand, the prophet looks exclusively to the present, and brings out in fearful array the many heinous and rampant sins which were crying in Heaven's ear for vengeance." We have in the text—

I. AN APPALLING CATALOGUE OF THE PEOPLE'S SINS. 1. *The nature of these sins.* (1) Forgetfulness of God. "Thou hast forgotten me, saith the Lord God." We mention this first, because it was the root-sin out of which all the others sprang. Men forget God's holy authority, his constant and universal presence, and his great goodness, and thus the principal restraints from sin are removed. "Forgetfulness of God opens the window to every wicked action." (2) Blood-guiltiness. This charge is repeatedly and variously stated. "The bloody city. . . . A city that sheddeth blood in the midst of her. . . . Thou art become guilty in thy blood that thou hast shed." This may refer, as Schröder suggests, "to murderous deeds generally; specially to judicial murders, consequently to the shedding of the innocent blood of righteous, God-fearing men, prophets, etc. (cf. Matt. xxiii. 37). The city which had its name from 'peace' has become a city of death to those who require true peace." Even the princes were guilty of violence and bloodshed. "Behold, the princes of Israel, every one according to his power, have been in thee to shed blood" (ver. 6). They did not recognize the sacred duties or the solemn accountabilities of their exalted station. They ruled not in accordance with right, but according to their might; and that might

they exercised barbarously and bloodily. And there were those who were guilty of bloodshedding by reason of their false witness. "Slanderous men have been in thee to shed blood." They were malignant slanderers of the innocent, who because of their slanders were adjudged to death. Moreover, mercenary and unjust judges condemned men to death for bribes. "In thee have they taken bribes to shed blood" (ver. 12). And it is probable that Schröder is correct in his opinion that both the false witnesses and the unrighteous judges were thus wickedly employed by the violent and murderous princes. Thus in Jerusalem, "the holy city," human life was no longer regarded as a sacred thing. It was ruthlessly slaughtered in defiance of law, in defiance of the feelings of our common humanity, and in defiance of the Creator and Father of men. (3) Idolatry. "A city . . . that maketh idols against herself to defile her. Thou art defiled in thine idols which thou hast made. . . . And in thee they have eaten upon the mountains." (On the extent of their idolatry and the pollutions thereof, see ch. viii. 5—16, and our notes thereon.) The eating upon the mountains, the seats of idol-worship, refers to the eating of things sacrificed unto idols (cf. ch. xviii. 6, 11). (4) Disregard of the tenderest and most sacred obligations towards their fellow-men. "In thee have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they wronged the fatherless and the widow." Loving respect to parents is commanded and encouraged in the Law of the Lord (Exod. xx. 12; Lev. xix. 3; Deut. v. 16). The New Testament enforces the same obligation (Matt. xv. 4; xix. 19; Eph. vi. 1—3); and the best feelings of the human heart plead for its observance. But in Jerusalem there were those who set at naught this obligation. God had made the cause of the stranger, the widow, and the fatherless in a special manner his own, and repeatedly enjoined righteousness and kindness in the treatment of them (Exod. xxii. 21—24; Deut. x. 18, 19; xxvii. 19; Ps. x. 14, 18; lxviii. 5; cxlvi. 9; Jer. vii. 6; Zech. vii. 9, 10). Yet there were those in Jerusalem who opposed and wronged them. (5) Profanation of Divine institutions. "Thou hast despised mine holy things, and hast profaned my sabbaths." The holy things comprise "all that the Holy One has instituted, consecrated, and commanded"—the priests, the temple, the sacred vessels, the sacrifices and sacraments, and all other religious ordinances of his appointment. These they had despised. And the sabbath they had profaned (cf. ch. xx. 12, †24). "He profanes the sabbath who does not celebrate it, who celebrates it ill, or who consecrates it to the service of sin" (Schröder). (6) Unchastity in its most revolting forms (vers. 10, 11). On the first clause of ver. 10, cf. Lev. xviii. 8; xx. 11; 1 Cor. v. 1; on the second, cf. Lev. xviii. 19; xx. 18; on the first clause of ver. 11, cf. Lev. xviii. 20; xx. 10; on the second, cf. Lev. xviii. 15; xx. 12; and on the third, cf. Lev. xviii. 9; xx. 17. (7) Covetousness in its worst manifestations. "In thee have they taken bribes to shed blood; thou hast taken usury and increase, and thou hast greedily gained of thy neighbours by oppression" (ver. 12). Covetousness in their judges was so extreme that they accepted bribes to condemn the innocent to death. "Usury is the profit exacted for the loan of money, increase that which is taken for goods; both are alike forbidden (Lev. xxv. 36; Deut. xxiii. 19)." Yet in Jerusalem they had taken both. And taking advantage of their neighbours' distress and need, they had oppressed them by exacting exorbitant interest on any loan granted for their help. Such were the sins charged against the people of Judah at this time. 2. *The scene of these sins.* Jerusalem. In this paragraph we have the words, "in thee," or "in the midst of thee," not less than twelve times. This was a grievous aggravation of their sins that they were committed in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was spoken of as "the holy city;" it was the seat of the worship of the true and holy God; it was celebrated in sacred song as the dwelling-place of the Most High (Ps. lxxvi. 2); and it was favoured religiously above any other city in the world. But now it had become "the bloody city," the "defiled" city, the home of the foullest crimes. "A Jerusalem may become a Sodom, a holy city a den of murderers." And if it do so, its former privileges aggravate its guilt and augment its doom (cf. Matt. xi. 20—24; Luke xii. 47, 48). 3. *The maturity of these sins.* "Thou hast caused thy days to draw near, and art come even unto thy years" (ver. 4; cf. ch. xxi. 25, 29). By reason of its sins Jerusalem had grown ripe for the sickle of the Divine judgment. By the extent and enormity of its transgressions it had hastened the time of its doom. In the history of persistent wickedness there comes a crisis

when the evil-doers are ripe for judgment; and then the Divine executioners go forth against them.

II. THE DIVINE VISITATION ON ACCOUNT OF THE PEOPLE'S SINS. 1. *They become a reproach among the nations.* "Therefore have I made thee a reproach unto the nations, and a mocking to all the countries. Those that be near, and those that be far from thee, shall mock thee, thou infamous one and full of tumult." We noticed (on ch. xxi. 28) how the Ammonites reproached the people of Judah, and were to be punished for so doing. Yet although the people of Ammon had no right to reproach their suffering neighbours, the Jews deserved reproach. Jerusalem had made itself infamous by its wickedness before it became a reproach and a mocking unto the nations. "Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people." 2. *They shall be dispersed among the nations.* "And I will scatter thee among the nations, and disperse thee through the countries." We have noticed this point in ch. v. 12; xii. 1—16; xx. 23 (cf. Deut. iv. 27; xxviii. 25, 64). 3. *They shall be dishonoured in the sight of the nations.* "And thou shalt be profaned in thyself, in the sight of the nations," etc. (ver. 16). "Thou shalt by thine own fault forfeit the privileges of a holy nation." Mark the retributiveness of this. "Jerusalem has desecrated the holy things of the Lord (ver. 8); therefore shall it also be desecrated for a requital (ver. 16). It has wickedly insulted the dignity of God; for this it must suffer the loss of its own dignity" (Hengstenberg). 4. *They would be unable to withstand this visitation of judgment.* "Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?" (ver. 14). Says Greenhill, "O Jerusalem! be thine heart never so stout or strong, my judgments will be too heavy for thee to bear them; when they come, thine heart will fail thee, fail thee of counsel, that thou shalt not know what to do, and fail thee of strength, that thou shalt not be able to do what thou knowest." When God in judgment visits any one, "heart and hand, courage and power, fail" (cf. Job xl. 9; Ps. lxxvi. 7; Nah. i. 6).

CONCLUSION. Many are the lessons deducible from our subject. We mention three. 1. *The fearful growth of sin.* Forgetfulness of God may develop into idolatry, adultery, murder. 2. *The essential ruinousness of sin.* It is of its very nature to blight and destroy everything that is true and beautiful, wise and good, right and strong, both in individuals and communities. "Sin, when it is full-grown, bringeth forth death." 3. *The righteous judgment of God against sin.* (Rom. ii. 2—11.) —W. J.

Vers. 17—22.—*Deplorable deterioration and deserved destruction.* "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross," etc. Notice—

I. THE DEPLORABLE DETERIORATION OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL. 1. *Here are several varieties of sinful character.* We will notice them as they are here adduced. (1) Dross. "The house of Israel is to me become dross; . . . they are the dross of silver." This does not mean ore which contains silver, but dross which has been separated from the silver—the refuse of dirt and rubbish which is removed from the precious metal in the cleansing, melting, and refining of it. The people of Judah and Jerusalem had become "the ignoble dross of noble silver." "The metaphor denotes the corruption of the people, who had become like base metal." (2) "Brass" probably indicates the hardihood of the people in sin; that they had become impudent in wickedness (cf. Isa. xlviii. 4). (3) "Tin" is suggestive of hypocrisy, being brilliant in appearance, but inferior in substance and value. So there were those in Jerusalem who made great profession of true religion, but whose moral character and conduct were base. (4) "Iron" may denote harshness and cruelty. That such was a characteristic of some of their great men and rulers is clear from ver. 27; ch. xxxiv. 2—4; and Zeph. iii. 3. (5) "Lead," pliable, yet not precious as compared with silver and gold, indicates the moral dulness and stupidity of the house of Israel. They were pliable to evil, yet not available for any high or holy uses (cf. Jer. iv. 22). Thus in Jerusalem there were various types of evil character; and these types are reproduced in our own age and country. 2. *Here is one characteristic which marks each of these varieties of sinful character.* They were each and all marked by degeneracy. In every one of these classes of evil character there had been a lamentable deterioration. "Thy

silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water." "How is the gold become dim! how is the most pure gold changed!" Thus the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah lamented this deterioration. (1) There was degeneracy of moral character. Their affections were corrupted; their principles were degraded; their conscience, having been often set at naught, was debased. So in the sight of him to whom all hearts are open they had become as dross. "The house of Israel is become dross unto me." Beware of the beginnings of sin, the initial stages of this degeneration of moral character. (2) Degeneracy of religious services. This deterioration is forcibly set forth and sternly rebuked in Isa. i. 11—17. Moreover, they had become idolaters: how, then, could their worship of the true God be genuine and acceptable? When personal character degenerates, the quality of the religious service rendered must decline. (3) Degeneracy of national position and power. The might and majesty of their kingdom were almost entirely departed. Their national independence was quite gone. When moral deterioration once powerfully sets in amongst any people, deterioration in all other forms quickly follows. Says Robertson, "The destiny of a nation is decided by its morals."

II. THE DETERMINED DESTRUCTION OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL. 1. *The gathering of the doomed people for destruction.* "Thus saith the Lord God; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem," etc. (vers. 19, 20). When pressed by their Chaldean enemies the people from far and wide took refuge in Jerusalem, trusting to its forces and fortifications for safety. So that city became as it were the furnace in which they were consumed by the triple fire of famine, pestilence, and sword. Mark, how naturally and easily God effects his purposes. He has not to build the furnace for their destruction: it is already built. He has not to force them into that furnace by supernatural means: in their approaching troubles they will hasten into it of their own accord. He controls all things for the execution of his deep and righteous designs. 2. *The infliction of destruction upon the doomed people.* (1) It was by the hand of God. "Thus saith the Lord God . . . I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem," etc. The Chaldeans were the instruments by which he effected his purpose; but God himself was the great Agent in the work. (2) It was an expression of the anger of God. "So will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury," etc. (vers. 20, 21). The wrath of God burns with awful intensity against sin. "Our God is a consuming fire." (3) It leads to the recognition of the hand of God. "Ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you." These words do not point to their reformation or purification. As Hengstenberg observes, "In the whole section the judgment is regarded, not in the light of purification, but in that of destruction; as Ezekiel usually considers the population of Jerusalem as an ungodly multitude doomed to be extirpated." Moreover, dross cannot be benefited by fire. It cannot be purified. After all burnings it remains dross—refuse. The fire was not to purify, but to punish them; not to cleanse, but to consume them. And in its fierce heat they would recognize the dread power of the God whom they had forsaken for idols, and whose word they had set at naught.

CONCLUSION. Guard against the beginnings of the deterioration of character. Seek the growth and progress of character in the true and good.—W. J.

Vers. 23—31.—*The universal prevalence of wickedness, and the consequent certainty of judgment.* "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed," etc.

I. THE UNIVERSAL PREVALENCE OF WICKEDNESS. This is exhibited by Ezekiel: 1. *In the absence of any effective correction thereof.* "Thou art the land that is not cleansed." This refers to the moral condition of the people. The figure is viewed by some as a land that is not freed from noxious weeds, by others as not cleansed as metals are by the refiner's fire. With either view the spiritual signification is the same. "Judæa had been oft cleansing," says Greenhill, "but was never thoroughly cleansed. Hezekiah and Josiah made the greatest cleansings, but all the sin was not purged out in their days; they took away the objects and mediums of sin, viz. the idols, images, groves, and high places, but the people continued wicked; they did not cleanse their hands nor hearts and turn to the Lord, but returned to their former and worse abominations, when those good kings were gone. The Lord had sent them many prophets, who dealt with them several ways to draw them to repentance. . . . Besides these

things, God oft sent sweeping and fierce judgments amongst them, famine, sword, pestilence; and notwithstanding all these, they returned not to the Lord, but the land, that is, the people of it, did remain uncleansed, they were like a land wherein was nothing but weeds, nettles, briars, and thorns." 2. *In its pernicious activity amongst all classes.* (1) The prophets. These should have been zealous by word and example in cleansing the land of its sins; but they were prominent in evil-doing. Several forms of this are mentioned by Ezekiel. (*a*) Their guilty subservience to wicked rulers. "Her prophets have daubed for them [*i.e.* the princes] with untempered mortar," etc. (ver. 28). The clauses of this verse have come under our notice already (ch. xiii. 10, 6, 7; xxi. 29). The princes were insatiably covetous, grossly dishonest, and ruthlessly cruel; and these false prophets who should have rebuked their wickedness, countenanced their procedure, encouraged their practices, and assured them that their ways were approved by God. (*b*) Their scandalous cupidity. "They take treasure and precious things" (ver. 25). They extorted from the people their valued possessions as the price of their prophesying. They did not forcibly despoil them of their treasures, but they obtained them by arts and devices which disgraced the sacred office whose functions they had assumed. "The dogs are greedy, they can never have enough; . . . they have all turned to their own way, each one to his gain, from every quarter" (Isa. lvi. 11). (*c*) Their grievous cruelty. "Like a roaring lion ravening the prey: they have devoured souls; . . . they have made her widows many in the midst thereof" (ver. 25). "The false prophets," says Hengstenberg, "rob the goods and devour the souls, in so far as they stand by to help forward the robbing and murdering acts of the great (ver. 27), and sharpen not, but rather soothe their conscience by saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. Thus they are accomplices in the robbing and murdering course of the great, who have them in their pay. They deport themselves as smooth and peaceful men, and present themselves as men of tenderness, in contrast with the rough preachers of repentance, the true prophets; but when examined in the light they are thieves and murderers." (*d*) Their shameful combination. "There is a conspiracy of her prophets in the midst thereof." They were solemnly banded together for the accomplishment of their atrocious designs. They had entered into a compact to prophesy the same things, and "were careful not to contradict each other's lies." (2) The priests. Two principal charges are brought against them. (*a*) Misinterpretation of God's Law. "Her priests have done violence to my Law." "To *violate* the Law is to break it—to offer *violence* to the Law is to misinterpret it." The latter is the charge which is here preferred against the priests. They perverted the holy Law to make it harmonize with the inclinations of a sinful people, and with their own wicked practices. (*b*) Profanation of God's institutions. "And have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and the common," etc. (ver. 26). We have noticed God's holy things in dealing with ver. 8. "It was the special office of the priests to keep up the distinction between holy and unholy, clean and unclean," consecrated and common things (cf. Lev. x. 10; xxii. 1—13). They "should have instructed the people what meats were lawful for them, what not; what sacrifices were fit to be brought to the Lord, and what not; who were worthy, and who not, to eat of the holy things and to approach unto the holy God" (Greenhill). But this they had not done. "The law of the sabbath," as Hengstenberg remarks, "is given as an example. This they rob of its deep spiritual import, and limit it to the external rest, as if it were given for animals, and not for men who are to serve God in spirit" (cf. ver. 8). By these doings they profaned God himself. "And I am profaned among them." The priests had degraded his infinitely holy and exalted character in the estimation of the people (cf. Mal. i. 6, 7). (3) The princes are charged with: (*a*) Cupidity. They sought "to get dishonest gain." They had their own resources and revenues; but not content with these, they coveted other and larger resources, and resorted to oppression to obtain them, imposing burdensome taxes upon the people. (*b*) Cruelty. "Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey; to shed blood," etc. (ver. 27; and cf. vers. 6, 7; Zeph. iii. 3). The covetousness of King Ahab led to the murder of Naboth the Jezreelite. (4) The people. "The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery," etc. (ver. 29). The prophet charges them with oppression by force and fraud. They deceived and cheated and robbed those whom they dared so

to treat. And they thus injured those whom they should have protected, viz. "the poor and needy and the stranger." Frequently these were specially commended to the care of the Israelites; and God had taken them under his own special guardianship (cf. Exod. xxii. 21; Deut. x. 18, 19; xxvii. 19; Ps. x. 14; xli. 1; cxl. 12; cxlvi. 9; Prov. xiv. 21; Zech. vii. 9, 10). Moreover, it is inexpressibly mean to wrong those who are unable to defend themselves and their rights. Yet it is not to be wondered at that these things were done by the common people; for in so doing they trod in the footsteps of their guides and rulers. Thus amongst all classes wickedness in some of its worst forms was terribly prevalent. 3. *In the fact that no one was found to keep back the destruction which it was bringing upon the land.* "And I sought for a man among them that should make up the fence," etc. (ver. 30; cf. Isa. lix. 4; Jer. v. 1; and see our homily on ch. xiii. 5). The Lord represents himself as looking solicitously and diligently for such a man, but finding none. "Jeremiah," says Hengstenberg, "by his powerful preaching of repentance, presented himself as such a public deliverer; but they despised him, and he could gain no position. The man alone is nothing. The position must be added, and the people must gather around him. One 'against whom every man contends' cannot avert the judgment of God; he can only accelerate it."

II. THE CONSEQUENT CERTAINTY OF JUDGMENT. When wickedness has become so flagrant and universally prevalent, and there is no one to stand between the guilty people and the approaching judgment, the execution of judgment is inevitable. Notice: 1. *The dread severity of this judgment.* "Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath" (ver. 31). Words similar to these we have already noticed (ver. 22; ch. xxi. 31). The judgment is so certain that it is spoken of as already accomplished. And as to its severity, what a day is "the day of the indignation" of God! Who can even conceive the terrors of his indignation? or the dread intensity of his wrath? 2. *The total absence of alleviations of this judgment.* "Thou art a land that is not rained upon in the day of indignation" (ver. 24); that "is a land that in the outburst of the Divine judgment finds no grace; and simply, as the connection shows, because its impurity is not removed. The rain in the day of indignation would be a benefit. It would quench the flame of the Divine indignation" (Hengstenberg). But such rain it will not have. The clause we are dealing with amounts to a declaration like this: "Thou shalt have no mercy when the fire of my wrath is kindled." 3. *The retributiveness of this judgment.* "Their own way have I brought upon their heads, saith the Lord God." This aspect of the Divine judgment has already engaged our attention more than once (on ch. vii. 3, 4; ix. 10; xvi. 43).

CONCLUSION. The whole subject is charged with most solemn warnings to the wicked, both as individuals and as communities or nations (Ps. ii. 10—12; Isa. lv. 6, 7).—W. J.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIII.

After another pause, the prophet enters on another elaborate parallel, after the pattern of ch. xvi., but with a marked variation. There we have the history of one harlot, *sc.* of Israel in its collective unity. Here we have two sister harlots, the daughters of one mother, and they are Samaria and Jerusalem, as both belonging to Israel. For the purpose of the parable, they are represented as having had a separate existence, even during the period of the sojourn in Egypt. This was probably historically true, the line of cleavage caused by the claims of Ephraim to supremacy appearing again and again long before the revolt of the ten tribes under Jeroboam (Judg. viii. 1; xii. 1; 2 Sam. xix. 43). Both were alike tainted with idolatry, as in the history of the golden calf, when they came out of Egypt (comp. ch. xvi. 7; xx. 7, 8). Yet even then Jehovah, like Hosea in the personal history which was to be to him as a parable of that of Israel, had compassion on them, harlots though they were (Hos. i. 2). They became his, and "bare sons and daughters."

Ver. 4.—The occurrence of proper names is almost unique in the parables of the Bible, the Lazarus of Luke xvi. 20 being

the only other instance. Their meaning is sufficiently clear. **Aholah** (but both names should begin with *O* rather than *A*) means "Her tent;" **Aholibah**, "My tent is in her." A parallel, which may have suggested the names, is found in the *Aholibamah* (equivalent to "My tent is in the high place") of Gen. xxxvi. 2, and another in the use of *Ohel* as a proper name in 1 Chron. iii. 20. The common element of the two names is the word that is commonly used for the sacred tent or tabernacle in the Pentateuch and elsewhere. The distinctive element of each points to the fact that the worship in Samaria was unauthorized. Her "tent" was hers, not Jehovah's. Of Jerusalem with its temple Jehovah could say, "My tent is in her," and this, as magnifying her privilege, also aggravated her guilt. Keil and others take the adjective here, as in ch. xvi. 46, as meaning "greater" rather than "older." The former adjective is, of course, applicable to the greater power of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes, and, even if we retain the renderings of the Authorized Version, is probably the explanation of Samaria being named as the elder of the two.

Ver. 5.—The history of both the sisters passes from the time of the Exodus to that of their separate existence, and starts, in fact, from their first intercourse with the great monarchies of Asia. So far it is less a survey of their successive stages of degradation, like that of ch. xvi., than a retrospect of their political alliances. **Aholah played the harlot.** The **lovers**, as in ch. xvi. 33, are the nations with which the kings of Israel were in alliance, and of these the Assyrians are named as pre-eminent. The word **neighbours**, which in its literal sense is hardly applicable, is probably to be taken of spiritual affinity, or may be taken as "come near" is in Gen. xx. 4; Ezek. xviii. 6; Lev. xx. 16. The Assyrians were those who, in that sense, came near to the harlot city. We have in 2 Kings xv. 20 the fact that Menahem paid tribute to Pul. Hos. v. 13 and vii. 11 speak generally of such alliances. The black obelisk of Shalmaneser records the fact that Jehu paid tribute to him ('Records of the Past,' v. 41). In the last-named case the tribute consisted chiefly of vessels of gold, bowls, goblets, etc.

Ver. 6.—**Clothed with blue.** The same word as that used in the description of the tabernacle (Exod. xxvi. 4; xxvi. 31, *et al.*). It was probably some hue of the Tyrian purple kind which marked the official dress of the "captains" of the Assyrian armies. The words, with those that follow, bring before us the magnificent array of the Assyrian cavalry—a force in which Israel, throughout its history, was deficient (Judg. v. 10; Zech. ix. 9; Isa. xxxvi. 8).

Vers. 7—10.—The next two verses paint the consequence of the alliance first with Assyria and then with Egypt. She adopted the religion of Assyria, probably in the form of the worship of Ishtar (Ashtoreth) as the queen of heaven. Having done this, the kings of Israel sought to play off one kingdom against the other (see Hos. vii. 11; 2 Kings xvii. 4). It was, in fact, the discovery of Hoshea's treachery in this matter that led Shalmaneser to besiege Samaria. The result of that siege is described in general terms in ver. 10. She, the city of Samaria, was slain with the sword. Her sons and daughters were taken into exile. So she became famous (*i.e.* infamous, like the Latin *famosus*), literally, *a name* among women, *sc.* among the neighbouring nations.

Vers. 11, 12.—The issue of the Assyrian alliance in the fall of Samaria might have served as a warning to the kings of Judah. But it did not. They also courted the alliance of the kings of Assyria, as in the case of Ahaz (2 Kings xvi. 7—10) and Tiglath-Pileser. Hezekiah followed in the same line, though he too trusted in Egypt, and afterwards rebelled. Manasseh too paid tribute, and made Jerusalem the scene of a confluent idolatry, which included that of Assyria. Even Josiah went forth against Pharaoh-Necho as the faithful vassal of either Assyria or Babylon. The splendour which had fascinated Samaria fascinated her also. Here **clothed most gorgeously** takes the place of "clothed in blue" in ver. 6, describing, probably, the same fact.

Ver. 14.—The sin of Judah went a step further than that of Samaria. She courted the alliance of the Chaldeans. Probably the sojourn of Manasseh at Babylon (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11) led him to see in that city a possible rival to Assyria. The embassy of Merodach-Baladan to Hezekiah (Isa. xxxix.) implies, on the other hand, that Babylon was looking to Judah for support against Assyria. The prophet represents this political coquetting, so to speak, as another act of whoredom. Aholibah saw the **images of the Chaldeans portrayed with vermilion** (probably "red ochre:" colours seem to have been used largely both in Assyrian and Babylonian sculpture as in Egyptian, and Judah seems to have copied them, Jer. xxii. 14) and fell in love with them. As the passions of a Messalina might be roused by sensuous pictures of masculine beauty, so Judah was led on by what her envoys reported of the magnificence of the palaces, the strength of the armies, of the Chaldeans. The journey of Jonah to Nineveh, and those implied in Hos. vii. 11, as well as the prophecy of Nahum, all indicate a more or less intimate knowledge of the Mesopotamian monarchies. The

mission of Merodach-Baladan would be naturally followed by a return embassy from Judah. A later instance under Zedekiah meets us in Jer. xxix. 3.

Ver. 15.—**Exceeding in dyed attire**; better, *with dyed turbans*, or *tiaras*, such as are seen on the Assyrian monuments of Nimrûd, Khorsabad, and Kouyunyik.

Ver. 17.—The words paint the intimate alliance, the political prostitution, as it were, involved in the alliance with Babylon. **Her mind was alienated from them.** Interpreted by the history, the words point to the fact that Judah soon found out how hollow was the help gained by the alliance with Babylon, and turned, after Josiah's death, to Egypt as a counterpoise. As in the history of Amnon (2 Sam. xiii. 15), lust, when it had wrought its will, passed into loathing and disgust. Jehoiakim and Zedekiah were examples of what we may well call this distracted policy. But, as it was, this alienation did but increase her guilt. As things were, it would have been better, as Jeremiah all along counselled, to accept the rule of the Chaldeans. The mind of Jehovah was alienated from Jerusalem as hers had been from the Chaldeans.

Ver. 19.—**Yet she multiplied her whoredoms.** The disappointment and failure, however, did not lead to repentance. Foreign alliances, and with them foreign idolatries, were courted more eagerly than ever, though in a different direction. The lovers were changed, but the harlotry went on.

Ver. 20.—**She doted on her paramours.** Commonly the word is used of a concubine (Gen. xxii. 24; Judg. viii. 31). Here it is used in scorn of the Egyptian princes whose favour Judah courted, reminding us of Homer's Ἀχαιΐδες οὐκετ' Ἀχαιοί, as indicating their political weakness. All that need be said of the comparison that follows is that here also Ezekiel follows in the footsteps of Jeremiah (Jer. v. 8). What is indicated is that Judah threw herself into the idolatrous ritual of Egypt with an almost orgiastic passion. The harlot nation returned, as it were, to her first love, and renewed the whoredoms of her youth.

Vers. 22, 23.—The **lovers** from whom the mind of Judah was **alienated** were, as in ver. 17, the Chaldeans. With these are joined **Pekod, and Shoa, and Koa.** The Authorized and Revised Versions, following the LXX., take these as proper names, and Ewald, Smend, and Fürst find in them those of Chaldean tribes. The Vulgate, followed by Luther, gives *nobiles, tyrannosque, et principes*, and Keil and Hengstenberg substantially adopt this rendering, giving "rulers, lords, and nobles." "Pekod" appears as a place in Jer. l. 20 (compare Schrader's 'Cuneiform Inscriptions,' ii. pp. 32, 117, 120, where Shoa and Koa are identified with Medo-Elamite tribes east of the Tigris), but the other names are unknown to history. On the whole, the balance seems in favour of the rendering in the text. With these are joined **all the Assyrians**, who, under Nebuchadnezzar, fought, of course, in his armies." Now she should see **her desirable young men . . . riding upon horses** (the prophet repeats with sarcasm the phrase of ver. 12) in another guise than she had expected.

Ver. 24.—**With chariots, waggons, and wheels**, etc. The first word is only found here, and probably means "armour." So the Revised Version, *with weapons, chariots, and waggons.* **They shall judge thee according to their judgments**; *sc.* shall execute the judgment which God has assigned to them after their own manner, *sc.* their usual cruel treatment of barbarous nations.

Ver. 25.—**They shall take away thy nose and thine ears**, etc. (For instances of this or like mutilation, in the case of prisoners of war, see the case of Zedekiah, Jer. lii. 11; Herod., iii. 69, 154.) Possibly it may have been known to Ezekiel as a punishment for the adulterer or adulteress in Egypt and other countries, and if so, he might have selected it as specially appropriate to his parable (Martial, 'Epigr.,' ii. 83; iii. 85). **Thy residue shall be consumed with fire.** The Hebrew word for "residue" (not that usually so translated) is the same as that previously translated "remnant." In the first clause it clearly points to the men of Jerusalem who are left after the capture. In the second its meaning is determined by the fact that it follows after the deportation of the sons and daughters. All that was left—in the parable, of the mutilated trunk of the adulteress, in the history, of the devastated city, *sc.* the empty houses—should be destroyed by fire.

Ver. 27.—**Thy whoredom** brought **from the land of Egypt**; *i.e.* the last political alliance between Judah and Egypt. This, together with the Egyptian cultus that accompanied it, should be made to cease. That would no longer be in the thoughts of the exiles; their hopes from that quarter were extinguished for ever.

Ver. 28.—Once again with incisive sarcasm the prophet reiterates the phrase of ver. 17. The punishment should be all the more terrible as coming from those whom the adulteress had once loved with the love that had passed into loathing.

Ver. 29.—**All thy labour**; *sc.* all the results of labour, all thy wealth.

Vers. 31—33.—**I will give her cup into thine hand.** (For the image of the cup as the symbol of good or evil fortune, see Ps.

xxiii. 5; Isa. li. 17; Jer. xxv. 15; Matt. xx. 22; xxvi. 39.) The cup, in this case, was to be deep and large as that of Samaria. The adulteress was to be "drunk, but not with wine" (Isa. xxix. 9). And that "cup," over and above the laughter and derision, would contain much of unknown calamities, the astonishment and desolation of ver. 33.

Ver. 34.—**Thou shalt break the sherds thereof.** The picture of the desolate adulteress becomes yet more terrible. Like a forlorn and desperate castaway, she does shameful execution on herself; breaks her cup, and completes the work of mutilation in its most terrible form. That is the doom decreed for her, because she had forgotten her true husband and the love of her espousals. Revised Version gives *gnaw the sherds thereof*, painting yet more vividly the despair of the outcast.

Ver. 36.—As often, Ezekiel emphasizes by reiteration, begins yet a fresh discourse with the same words, **wilt thou judge**, as in ch. xx. 4 and xxii. 2, and enters on another summary of the sins of the two harlot sisters, in which Moloch-worship (ver. 37) and sabbath-breaking (ver. 38) were conspicuous elements. The nature of the guilt is emphasized (vers. 38, 39) by the fact that the idolatrous ritual was performed on the very day in which the people sacrificed in the temple; that it found a local habitation even there (comp. ch. viii. 17; 2 Kings xxi. 4; Jer. xxxii. 34).

Ver. 40.—**Ye have sent for men to come from far**, etc. The words obviously refer to the embassies which had been sent from time to time by both Samaria and Jerusalem to Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. The imagery of the earlier stage of the harlot's progress is resumed, and we have a picture almost the counterpart of that in Prov. vii. 10—21. She takes her bath, paints her eyelashes with *kohol*, the black pigment still used in the East, as Jezebel had done (2 Kings ix. 30). She decks herself with jewels, and sits on a divan (a sofa-couch, rather than bed), and prepares a table for a banquet. And on that table are the incense and the oil, symbols alike of wealth and worship, which Jehovah claims as his, and which she offers to her lovers (comp. ch. xvi. 13, 19; Hos. ii. 5, 8).

Ver. 42.—**A voice of a multitude**, etc. The word for "multitude" is strictly "tumult," and Keil and Currey render "The voice of tumult became still," *sc.* the threats of the alien powers whom Judah courted were for a time hushed by the tributes thus paid to them. **With the men of the common sort**; literally, as in the margin, *of the multitude of men*. **Sabeans from the wilderness.** The Revised Version, with Keil and almost all recent commentators, follows the margin, *drunkards* (LXX., *οἰνώμενοι*). "Sabeans" rests on a Jewish rendering of the text, but, as a people, the Sabeans, who dwelt south of Meroe, though named in Isa. xlv. 14, were too remote to come within the horizon of the parable. What Ezekiel dwells on is the ever-growing degradation of the harlot city. Not only the officers of the Chaldeans, but the mixed multitude, the very drunkards from the wilderness of Babylon, were admitted to her embraces. Possibly the word may point to the false gods to whom libations of wine were offered, but I incline to refer it rather to those who got drunk at their idol-festivals even in Jerusalem. Drunkenness was one of the vices of the Babylonians, and the prophets, who admired the Rechabites and the Nazarites (Jer. xxxv.; Amos ii. 11), must have looked on Judah's participation in that sin as a measureless degradation. The **bracelets** and **crowns** symbolize the wealth and prestige which the Chaldean alliance was supposed to bring with it.

Ver. 43.—The whole verse is obscure, and has been very differently rendered. (1) The Authorized Version may be paraphrased, "*Then* said I to her that was worn out with her whoredoms, passed her prime and enfeebled, Will they (the foreign nations) commit whoredoms (enter into alliances) with her? *sc.* What is there to attract now? And yet the habit is inveterate. She has grown old in her vice, and cannot cease from it." (2) The Revised Version takes it not as a question, but as a statement: *Now said I of her that was old in adulteries, Now will they commit*, etc. So, in the main, Keil. The text is probably corrupt, and resists conjectural emendation. In any case the general meaning is clear. The sin is of too long standing to be cured.

Ver. 45.—**The righteous men** are in effect the ministers of God's wrath. The doom comes at last on both the sisters, who are murderers as well as adulteresses. They shall suffer the punishment of stoning which the Law commanded (Lev. xx. 10; Deut. xxii. 22, 24; John viii. 5), and after that their bodies were to be hacked to pieces. The result of that judgment would be that all women should learn not to do after their lewdness, *i.e.* that idolatry should cease from being the sin of the cities of Israel.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 4.—*Aholah and Aholibah.* "Her tent" and "My tent is in her." These names stand respectively for Israel and Judah. Israel, the northern kingdom, had her own tent, *i.e.* she was independent after secession from Judah, like a woman who has left her mother's tent and has one of her own. Judah retained the temple, the representative of the tabernacle of the wilderness; therefore God's tent was in her. These prosaic facts were suggestive of deeper traits of national character, which the symbolical names suggested.

I. INDEPENDENCE. Israel is named Aholah. She has her own tent; she is independent. This national independence has its counterpart in individual independence. Jacob leaves his home and fights his own battle with the world. Joseph is sent away from his family, and cast in his youth among the grand opportunities of a great nation and the direful temptations of a dissolute society. The young man going out into the world enters on the exhilarating but trying career of independent life. There are special opportunities, duties, and dangers in having one's own tent. 1. *Opportunities.* The independent position is not hampered with restrictions. Freedom means a wide range for individual activity. Now is the time to realize the long-cherished dreams of earlier days. 2. *Duties.* Duty dogs the footsteps of opportunity. As our scope for choice and individual activity is enlarged, the obligations of service are correspondingly increased. The slave has few duties; the free man great obligations. The liberty of manhood brings the burden of a man's duty. Christian liberty increases the obligations of Christian service. 3. *Dangers.* Israel gained in freedom by her rebellion against the petty tyranny of Rehoboam; but the liberty which was got by separation brought its own great dangers. Cut off from the temple-worship, excluded from the national festivals, deprived of the highest religious ministrations, the freed people were tempted to fall into the idolatry of their ancestors and their neighbours. This temptation was too great for them, and they apostatized earlier than Judah. It is dangerous to be separated from religious ordinances. The young man who leaves the Christian home of his childhood for new scenes of worldly life is entering on a path of peril. A self-contained life is open to temptation. To seek to be independent of God is to court ruin.

II. DIVINE FELLOWSHIP. Judah is named Aholibah. God's tent is in her. She has the outward means and symbols, at least, of the Divine presence. This fact represents high privileges, with corresponding guilt when God is forsaken. 1. *High privileges.* (1) *Prosperity.* God's presence brings joy and true welfare. (2) *Protection.* If God's tent is in our midst, the Captain of salvation is with us, and though a host should encamp around us, we need fear no evil. (3) *Spiritual grace.* The temple was not a mere meeting-place, sanctuary, and fortress. Its services were "means of grace." God is with us to enlighten, purify, quicken. 2. *Heavy guilt.* Aholibah apostatized. Her guilt was all the greater that she bore such a name, and could claim the symbol of God's presence as peculiarly her own. The greatest guilt is that of men who know God and have enjoyed his presence and grace in the past, and who, sinning openly against light, have spurned those privileges and wilfully rebelled against their chosen God. No sinners are so guilty as apostatized Christians. Mark: it is possible to be Aholibah and to enjoy God's presence, and yet to turn against him, fall, and be ruined.

Ver. 12.—*Doting on the Assyrians.* This foolish, fatal infatuation of Israel for the Assyrians may be taken as a striking instance of the fascination of worldliness. Israel had known the true God, and had been called to a peculiar destiny as a holy and separate nation; yet she turned aside from her high vocation, lured by the fatal charms of military splendour and sensuous luxury in a great heathen empire.

I. GOD'S PEOPLE ARE REQUIRED TO SEPARATE THEMSELVES FROM THE WORLD. All who hear the call of God must follow him into the wilderness, or, if he gives them a land flowing with milk and honey, must still keep themselves apart from the evil world. This does not mean the physical separation of a hermit's exile or a monk's cloistered imprisonment. The true separation is spiritual, not local. We are called

to forsake the spirit of the world, to renounce its evil practices, and to repudiate its low, material, sensuous tone of life.

II. THE WORLD ENDEAVOURS TO ENSNARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD. It is not content to let them stand aloof; it appears as a tempter trying to charm the bride of Christ into infidelity. We cannot afford to despise its fascinating influence, for this is most subtle and potent. It comes through various means. 1. *Proximity.* Assyria was a "neighbour" of Israel. The Church is in the world. Christian men are in daily intercourse with worldly men. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." 2. *Earthly attractiveness.* There was a material splendour in the great empire of Assyria which the marvellous sculptures and inscriptions that have been made familiar to us by Layard and others put beyond question. The "governors and rulers clothed most gorgeously," and the horsemen, "all of them desirable young men," awoke the admiration of the poor little semi-barbarous nation, Israel. The luxury of the world, its luscious literature and sensuous art, its enormous resources, and its elaborate culture of earthly refinement, are necessarily most fascinating. 3. *Natural inclination.* The world could not touch us for harm if it found nothing sympathetic in us. But it easily discovers remains of its old dominion. The old Adam is not quite dead. Passion within may be roused to answer to temptation from without.

III. THE SNARES OF THE WORLD ARE FATAL TO THOSE WHO ARE ENTANGLED IN THEM. Israel's doting upon the Assyrians was fatal to her religion, her morals, and her national existence. To succumb to the spirit of the world is to make shipwreck of life. 1. *Religious ruin.* "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." The spirit of worldliness is antagonistic to God. As surely as this spirit gains ground in our lives, the spirit of devotion will recede. 2. *Moral ruin.* True worldliness is morally evil. It is not a mere habit of external and earthly living. It carries with it the indulgence of the lower life. At least it tends to this, and all its fascinations drag the soul down. 3. *Life-ruin.* In the end the Christian man who gives himself up to the attractions of worldly living will reap the consequences of his sin in corruption and death.

Ver. 31.—*A bad example.* Judah followed the bad example of her sister Israel; consequently, she was to share the fate of Israel. We see here an instance of the evil influence of a bad example, and of its fatal consequences.

I. THE EVIL INFLUENCE OF A BAD EXAMPLE. Consider how this fell power is exerted. 1. *By the fascination of suggestion.* The path is made by the pioneer, and the follower has only to walk in it. The sight of a predecessor indicates the road, calls attention to it, suggests the idea of walking in it. The publications of the details of a horrible crime in the newspaper exerts a most deleterious influence in this way by filling the minds of people with thoughts of a kindred character. Hence the common occurrence of an epidemic of similar crimes. 2. *By the attraction of sympathy.* Judah is drawn to follow her sister Israel. When Israel goes wrong, Judah accompanies her and goes wrong in a similar manner. Affection is fatal when it induces us to copy the vices of those whom we love. Even sisters must part when one chooses an evil way, if the other would not also choose sin. But it is hard to resist the charms of affection. 3. *By the delusion of a false excuse.* Judah pleads the example of her sister as an excuse. What others are doing seems to be justified by their action. Instead of measuring our conduct by the Law of God, we are tempted to test it by the corresponding conduct of others.

II. THE SIN OF FOLLOWING A BAD EXAMPLE. Judah is blamed for following the bad example of Israel. It is not for one moment supposed that the misconduct of her sister could be pleaded as a justification for her own repetition of it. We cannot be excused in our own sin on the ground that we are simply treading in the footsteps of predecessors. See how this sin is inexcusable. 1. *Because the evil of the way is known.* The foolish follower is not deceived. Judah knows that Israel has taken an evil course. Bad examples may ensnare the careless, but those who have minds to think for themselves cannot be blind to the wrong character of the example before them. 2. *Because of the freedom of the will.* A bad example is a temptation to evil; but it is not a force compelling men to follow. Its attraction can only work through the will, never contrary to it. Therefore one must consent voluntarily to follow the evil pattern before doing so, and this free consent destroys the excuse that the example is

to blame rather than the man who imitates it. 3. *Because of one's own advantages.* Judah might plead that she was sorely tempted by her sister's example. But then she possessed higher privileges than Israel. She was Aholibah, while her sister was only Aholah. She had the temple of God in her midst, while Israel was left to her own resources. Christians are doubly guilty in following the bad example of godless men. They sin in spite of higher influences which should suffice to keep them in the right path.

III. THE FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF FOLLOWING A BAD EXAMPLE. Judah was walking in the way of her sister; therefore she must drink of her sister's cup. Companions in guilt will be companions in doom. It is impossible to walk in the same path as another without going towards the same goal. Moreover, if higher religious privileges do not keep us from following the sinful practices of worldly men, most certainly they will not protect us from sharing their fate. He who treads the sinner's flowery path will drink of the sinner's bitter cup.

Ver. 35 (first half of verse).—*Forgetting God.* I. FORGETTING GOD IMPLIES THAT HE HAS FORMERLY BEEN KNOWN. We cannot forget what we have never known. The lower animal, which is incapable of entertaining a thought of God, cannot forget him. If I forget much, I must have known much. 1. *Men have a natural knowledge of God.* Few races, if any, are without a trace of religion. The Andaman islanders and the Fuegians are said to have been discovered in that state. If so, they are just the exception that proves the rule. The science of comparative religion reveals an underlying primitive theism beneath the tangled growth of later mythology. St. Paul appealed to the natural knowledge of God among the heathen (Acts xvii. 28; Rom. i. 21). 2. *They who have seen the Jewish and Christian revelation have a larger knowledge of God.* Israel had known God by his special manifestations in the Law, in his providence and miracles, in the prophets. All Christendom is open to the higher knowledge of God in Christ. Children in Christian homes and Sunday schools have known God, though they may have forsaken him in later days. 3. *The people of God have the fullest knowledge of God.* True Israelites and Christians know God as he is never known to the outer world. They have the knowledge of experience, spiritual sympathy, and fellowship (John xiv. 7).

II. THERE ARE MANY INDUCEMENTS TO FORGET GOD. 1. *He is invisible.* The knowledge of God is held only by faith. The decay of faith leads to forgetting God. It requires some spiritual effort to keep our hold on the Unseen. 2. *Earthly interests distract our thoughts.* These things are seen, present and pressing; they crowd about us and force themselves upon us. They make themselves felt as intensely real. Pleasures of life and cares of life, fascinating delights and absorbing anxieties, all tend to put out the thought of God. 3. *Sinful inclinations rouse an aversion to the thought of God.* He is holy; he disapproves of sin. It is not pleasant to think of God when we are choosing the evil way.

III. FORGETTING GOD IS ITSELF A GREAT SIN. We can control our memory by fixing our thoughts upon God. This is not a case of mere brain failure. There is a moral defect behind it. Apart from all active deeds, the very forgetting God is itself wicked on several grounds. 1. *God has never forgotten us.* He has provided for our daily needs, while we have been ignoring the hand from which the provision came. He is our Father. Gratitude and love should keep the thought of God warm in our heart. To forget God implies gross unthankfulness and a base lack of natural affection. 2. *God claims our attention and obedience.* He is our Lord. He expects us to listen to his voice, give heed to his commands, and obey his will. But to forget God is to ignore these duties.

IV. FORGETTING GOD IS HURTFUL TO MAN. They know not what they miss who forsake their true life and forget their Father in heaven. Seeking liberty, they court death. 1. *This is the loss of the best blessings of Heaven.* The light of God's countenance is despised. His guidance, comfort, support, and salvation are neglected. The joy of communion is renounced. 2. *This incurs a fatal doom.* God cannot let us forget him for ever. If we do not remember his love to-day, we may encounter his wrath to-morrow (Ps. xliv. 20, 21).

V. GOD MERCIFULLY INTERFERES TO SAVE US FROM FORGETTING HIM. 1. *He reveals*

himself in his Word. The revelation of nature is daily spread before us. But when that is despised, God adds the more clear voice of prophecy. We have the open Bible to remind us of God. 2. *God comes to us in his Son.* As men had forgotten him, God came right down among them, looked at them through a human countenance, and spoke in a human voice. Christ comes to save us from forgetting God. 3. *God rouses us by his providence.* We are forgetting God while all goes smoothly. Then his thunders burst over us. They startle and alarm, but they awaken. Thus God saves us from forgetting him.

Ver. 36 (last clause).—*Abominations declared.* I. ABOMINATIONS MAY BE HIDDEN. 1. *They may be committed in secret.* Then they are unknown to every one but the guilty persons and their accomplices. 2. *Their corrupt character may not be admitted.* Then they may be done in open daylight without shame or rebuke. Not only the outside public, but even the guilty persons themselves, may not perceive the full evil of what they are doing. 3. *They may be forgotten.* People do not wish to call to mind a disagreeable past. As the years glide by it slides further and further into the dim land of forgetfulness. By dint of reiterated self-flattery the guilty persons almost persuade themselves that they did not do the evil things of those old bad years, or that somehow they have left their former selves behind them in that evil past; or they put the thought of it quite out of their minds.

II. ABOMINATIONS CANNOT BE HIDDEN FOR EVER. God does not forget them. The recording angel has written them in his awful book with ink that never fades. The subtle poison of them lingers in the souls of the guilty. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Some seeds take long to germinate. But the seeds of evil deeds have a fatal vitality, though they be slow to make an appearance. We cannot escape the consequences of our misdeeds by forgetting them.

III. IT IS BEST THAT ABOMINATIONS SHOULD BE REVEALED TO THE GUILTY ON EARTH. It is no piece of idle vengeance that tortures Israel with a revelation of its abominations. 1. *It is well for the guilty to know them.* There is no chance of repentance until the heinousness of sin is acknowledged. But that this may be the case, the abominations must first be revealed to the sinner. There may be little good in proclaiming his guilt aloud to the world. What is needed is that it should be brought well home to his own conscience. 2. *It is well that they should be known now.* If men wait for the certain revelation of final judgment, the abominations will be declared in trumpet-tones of denunciation, and burned into the soul in memories of fire. It is infinitely better to become conscious of them first, that the awakening knowledge of guilt may perchance lead to contrition and repentance.

IV. GOD DECLARES THEIR ABOMINATIONS TO SINNERS. He is too merciful to permit his children to perish without warning. The Bible contains awful revelations of human sin. If we take it as a lamp, and turn its light on our own lives and into our own hearts, it will reveal many an abomination of wickedness hitherto calmly ignored. The prophets of Israel were required to reveal man's sin quite as much as to make known the thoughts and will of God. John the Baptist came to prepare for Christ by declaring to men the abominations of their ways. Christ himself makes men feel their sin by his own holy presence. So Peter feared to be near him (Luke v. 8). A vision of Christ throws a wholesome light on the hideous condition of an impenitent soul. This is to lead to repentance and salvation through Christ. Then the abominations may be blotted out (1 John i. 7).

Vers. 40 and 42.—*The foreign and the common.* In ver. 40 Israel is seen to be seeking distant foreign connections, like a faithless wife who goes far afield for companions in sin. In ver. 42 the charm of the distant and the foreign is swallowed up in the vulgarity of sin, which is the same in essence all the world over.

I. THE CHARM OF THE FOREIGN. The Jews were especially warned against foreign alliances, as they meant distrust in God, and as they led to the introduction of corrupting heathen influences. Nevertheless, the foolish people gave way to the fatal fascination of foreigners. 1. *There is a charm in novelty.* We are tempted to accept alien ideas just because they strike us with a certain freshness. Thus all sorts of earthly notions and practices have been imported into God's Israel, the Christian Church, by

men who have been "sent for from far," *i.e.* by the influence of external philosophy and worldly example. 2. *There is an attraction in cosmopolitanism.* We in England have peculiarly wide and varied relations with the world, and Christianity claims all the earth as its domain. But the fatal charm is that of following the example of the various practices of mankind instead of impressing a Christian influence on the race. This was Israel's mistake. Called to carry out a mission to the world, she succumbed to the spirit of the world. There is great danger lest the Church should follow her example in this respect. Indeed, this has happened already to a deplorable extent. A pseudo-liberalism claims to be following the *zeit-geist*, and so to be adapting Christianity to the world. This means unfaithfulness to Christ. St. Paul would be all things to all men, but only that he might win all men to Christ, never so as to surrender Christ to please the world. That is the part of a Judas.

II. THE DISILLUSION OF THE COMMON. Israel and Judah cast wistful glances on the foreigner. But when they had accomplished their purpose and were indulging in revelry with a multitude of people who had adorned them with the barbaric magnificence of golden bracelets and crowns, what did it all amount to but the shame of a low, drunken debauch? Novelty in sin does not elevate the evil thing, which is essentially the same, however it may be clothed and decorated. The so-called refinement of vice is but a veneer on the surface which leaves the rottenness beneath untouched. Cosmopolitanism does not save from moral corruption. The whole world is essentially one in its sin. There is a horrible vulgarity about all wickedness. If we would be saved from this we must in a sense become a "separate people." We may and we should still sympathize with all our fellow-men, send the gospel to every nation, and ourselves learn such lessons as a wide view of mankind may teach us. Yet for all the higher efforts of life the inspiration must be found in the retired and secret chamber of prayer.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—49.—*Inexcusable infidelity.* What it must have cost the patriotic prophet to write this chapter passes our power to imagine. The Jew was naturally and pardonably proud of his country and of its history. No thoughtful Jew could, indeed, be insensible to imperfections and flaws in the national character, to stains upon the nation's annals. But in this passage of his prophecies the dark shading is relieved by no gleam of light. Israel is depicted as bad from the days of Egyptian bondage down to the days of Babylonian captivity. The figurative language employed is such as could only be justified by facts most discreditable to the character of the Hebrew people. That there were exceptions to the rule, Ezekiel was well aware. But the rule was that the people were, at every stage of their existence, prone to depart from the God to whom they owed every privilege, every blessing; that they resisted no temptation to idolatry; that they were incessantly provoking the anger and just condemnation of the theocratic king. To complete the horror of the representation, the northern and southern tribes are alike included in the indictment and in the guilt. Penetrating beneath the faithful but very repulsive, yet necessary and just, similitude employed by the prophet, to the moral and spiritual lessons thus conveyed, we may trace the story of the inexcusable infidelity of Judah and Israel as related without exaggeration by one of their own race.

I. DISLOYALTY TO JEHOVAH WAS COMMON TO JUDAH AND ISRAEL. We have but to turn to the Books of Kings and of Chronicles to see that in this respect the northern and southern kingdoms were alike, if not equally, guilty. In the record we find, notwithstanding certain remarkable exceptions in the case of Judah, that kings and people continually forsook their Divine Deliverer and rightful King, and addicted themselves to the degrading idolatries practised by the surrounding nations.

II. DISLOYALTY TO JEHOVAH COMMENCED IN THE NATION'S YOUTH, DURING THE EGYPTIAN BONDAGE. The record of the wanderings in the wilderness is a sufficient proof of this. The worship of the golden calf is a well-known instance of the readiness of Israel to fall back into the Egyptian idolatry, which, it might have been supposed, they had for ever left behind them when they crossed the Red Sea, and witnessed the

powerlessness of the gods of Egypt to save Pharaoh and his mighty but misguided host.

III. DISLOYALTY TO JEHOVAH WAS REPEATED WHEN ISRAEL WAS BROUGHT INTO CONTACT WITH THE ASSYRIANS. In the frank and painful language of the prophet is depicted the fatal readiness of the Israelites to yield themselves to the seductions of the Oriental idolatries, and even to go out of their way to court the corruption which they should have eschewed. Compared with the pure and stately rites instituted by Divine command, and celebrated in the temple courts of Jerusalem, the worship of the Assyrians was inexpressibly degrading. The length of time during which the Hebrews had enjoyed peculiar privileges increased their culpability in transferring, at this period, the allegiance they owed to the true God from him to the contemptible idols of Assyria.

IV. DISLOYALTY TO JEHOVAH ALIENATED HIM FROM THE PEOPLE WHOM HE HAD CHOSEN. As the soul of a husband is estranged from the adulteress who has deserted him, so the Lord declared his soul to be alienated from her whom he had signalized by his favour. Israel had forsaken the one incomparably holy and gracious God, and had attached herself to the lords many and the gods many of the surrounding peoples; and such conduct could not but raise a barrier between Jehovah and the nation that had shown such insensibility to his favour, and such readiness to yield to the advances of his enemies.

V. DISLOYALTY TO JEHOVAH WAS PUNISHED THROUGH THE AGENCY OF THE VERY PEOPLE THROUGH WHOSE INSTIGATION IT WAS COMMITTED. How remarkable the threat, "I will raise up thy lovers against thee"! By Assyria Judah and Israel were corrupted; and by Assyria they were chastened. They alienated the Lord, and yet found no help from the false gods for whose sake they had deserted him.

VI. PARTNERS IN DISLOYALTY WERE PARTNERS IN PUNISHMENT. Alike they sinned, and alike they suffered. They incurred the same fate, and from the same sword. Samaria and Judah alike endured the sorrows of the Eastern captivity and the shock of the Eastern armies.

VII. DISLOYALTY TO JEHOVAH WAS SEVERELY DEALT WITH. In various figures, each with its own dark shade of significance, the prophet portrays the impending fate of the guilty, apostate nations. They were mutilated; they were compelled to drink the cup of astonishment and desolation; they were consumed with fire and slain with the sword.

VIII. THE AIM OF THUS PUNISHING DISLOYALTY WAS TO BRING IT TO AN END. "Thus will I cause lewdness [*i.e.* idolatry] to cease out of the land, that all women [*i.e.* nations] may be taught not to do after your lewdness."

IX. JEHOVAH THUS VINDICATES HIS OWN CLAIM TO THE LOYALTY OF ALL MEN, AVENGING HIMSELF UPON THOSE WHO WRONG HIM. "Ye shall know that I am the Lord God." His honour he will not give unto another. To our reverence and our obedience, to our devotion and service, our Creater and Redeemer has an indisputable and indefeasible claim; and this he will assuredly assert and maintain. He will be honoured, both by the condemnation of the unfaithful and rebellious, and by the salvation of the penitent, the submissive, and the loyal.—T.

Ver. 5*a*.—*Exalted relationship and enormous sin.* "And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine."

I. A RELATIONSHIP OF THE HIGHEST PRIVILEGE. "She was mine." Aholah is intended to represent the people of Israel as distinguished from the people of Judah. The Lord here says that she was his. In common with all other peoples, Israel was his: (1) By creation. God "himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." He is "the Father of spirits." (2) By sustentation. He is "the God in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways." With Job, we may say to him, "Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit." But: (3) Israel was his by redemption. He redeemed them from their bondage in Egypt by mighty works and marvellous signs. That emancipation is an illustration of the redemption of man from sin effected by our Saviour Jesus Christ. "The Lord hath anointed him . . . to proclaim liberty to the captives," etc. (Isa. lxi. 1, 2). He "gave himself a ransom for all." (4) Israel was his pre-eminently by covenant engagement. "I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine" (ch. xvi. 8). They belonged to him as a wife belongs to her

husband. This is the relationship to which the text points, and which is treated of in ch. xvi. It is great condescension on the part of God to authorize the prophets thus to represent his relation to his people. "Thy Maker is thy Husband; the Lord of hosts is his name" (Isa. liv. 5). "Return, O backsliding children, saith the Lord; for I am a Husband unto you" (Jer. iii. 14). This relationship should be characterized by: 1. *Tender affection.* We may see this in the way in which St. Paul writes of the love between Christ and the Church (Eph. v. 23—32). When marriage is contracted without true mutual affection, the relation is desecrated. 2. *Exalted privilege.* In taking the Israelites to be his, God gave himself to them as their supreme Portion. "They shall be my people, and I will be their God" (Jer. xxxii. 38). "This of God's being our God," says Charnocke, "is the quintessence of the covenant, the soul of all the promises: in this he hath promised whatsoever is infinite in him, whatsoever is the glory and ornament of his nature, for our use; not a part of him, or one single perfection, but the whole vigour and strength of all. As he is not a God without infinite wisdom, and infinite power, and infinite goodness, and infinite blessedness, etc., so he passes over, in this covenant, all that which presents him as the most adorable Being to his creatures: he will be to them as great, as wise, as powerful, as good, as he is in himself. And the assuring us, in this covenant, to be our God, imports also that he will do as much for us as we would do for ourselves, were we furnished with the same goodness, power, and wisdom: in being our God, he testifies it is all one as if we had the same perfections in our power to employ for our use; for he being possessed with them, it is as much as if we ourselves were possessed with them for our own advantage, according to the rules of wisdom, and the several conditions we pass through for his glory." 3. *Scrupulous fidelity.* The relationship imperatively demands this. God would not fail in one jot or tittle on his part. "If we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself." And Israel was required to be true to him in obeying his commands, and above all in worshipping him alone. "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me," etc. (Exod. xx. 1, *seq.*). Through Jesus Christ we may each enter into this exalted relationship. Through him we may each be enabled, without presumption, to say of the great God, "He is my God and my Father."

II. A SIN OF THE GREATEST HEINOUSNESS. "And Aholah played the harlot when she was mine." Israel is here represented as a wife who has been unfaithful to her husband. The primary reference is to the sin of Jeroboam in setting up the golden calves at Bethel and at Dan, and calling upon the people to worship God through them (1 Kings xii. 26—33). And this was but the beginning of Israel's sin. Afterwards they worshipped Baal and Astarte. Their sin involved: 1. *Positive injustice.* They robbed God of his rights. He has a just claim on our obedience, our reverence, and our love. This claim is firmly based upon what he is in himself—the Supremely Great and Good; and upon what he is and does in relation to us—our Creator, etc. Not to comply with his claims is to defraud him of his due. 2. *Base ingratitude.* How shameful were the returns which Israel made for his great kindness to them! Very strikingly is this set forth in ch. xvi. And their conduct has been too closely reproduced by us. For his fidelity we have returned unbelief; for his love, coldness of heart; for his beneficence, disobedience. How heinous this ingratitude is! And yet, alas, how common!

"Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keen,
Because thou art not seen,
Although thy breath be rude.

"Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
That dost not bite so nigh
As benefits forgot:
Though thou the waters warp,
Thy sting is not so sharp
As friend remember'd not."

(Shakespeare.)

3. *Heinous infidelity.* This is the aspect of Israel's sin to which prominence is given in the text. In forsaking the Lord God for idols they committed a treacherous breach of a sacred engagement. Their conduct is an illustration of the action of those who, having avowed their allegiance to him, turn their backs upon him and upon his cause. Terrible is their guilt, and deplorable their condition. "It is a miserable thing," says Bishop Ryle, "to be a backslider. Of all unhappy things that can befall a man, I suppose it is the worst. A stranded ship, a broken-winged eagle, a garden overrun with weeds, a harp without strings, a church in ruins,—all these are sad sights; but a backslider is a sadder sight still." And appalling will be their doom, even "a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries." Says Bunyan, "They fall deepest into hell who fall backwards into hell." Let backsliders return unto the Lord while there is yet time. "Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; I will not look in anger upon you," etc. (Jer. iii. 12, 14; Hos. xiv. 1—4).—W. J.

Ver. 9.—*Sinners left to themselves and to their sins.* "Wherefore I delivered her into the hand of her lovers," etc. The aspect of the sin of Israel which is most conspicuous in this chapter is not their idolatry so much as their contracting political alliances which were forbidden by God. "The imagery," as Fausset remarks, "is similar to that in ch. xvi.; but here the reference is not, as there, so much to the breach of the spiritual marriage-covenant with God by the people's *idolatries*, as by their *worldly spirit*, and their trusting to alliances with the heathen for safety, rather than to God." Our text suggests two observations—

I. DETERMINED PERSISTENCE IN SIN LEADS GOD TO ALLOW THE SINNER TO TAKE HIS OWN COURSE. The Israelites would trust in Egypt or in Assyria rather than in the Lord their God. Remonstrances against political alliances with heathen nations, or conformity to their religious observances, with warnings of the consequences of so doing, had been addressed to them in vain. Exhortations to trust in Jehovah alone had proved fruitless. All moral means had been employed to secure their fidelity to their duty and their God, but without avail. Wherefore the Lord "delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted." The Israelites would have their own way, and God at length allowed them to take it (cf. Ps. lxxxi. 11, 12). There are some to-day in whom we fear the same process is at work. Here is a man who makes riches the object of his supreme concern. Money is the god in which he trusts, and to which he is devoted. His great and constant efforts are made in order to acquire and retain riches. Remonstrances and rebukes for the course he is pursuing are unheeded by him. Exhortations and encouragements to cherish a different and nobler ambition, to trust a worthy object, and to live to God, are addressed to him in vain. He will go on in his own way. And at length God allows him to take his course, and live for money. The same thing takes place with others who make a god of pleasure, or who will trust supremely in their own sagacity and judgment, or whose grand ambition and ruling purpose is to attain conspicuous position or commanding power. If they are invincibly determined to follow their own course, God allows them to do so. The case is thus forcibly stated by Dr. Joseph Parker: "A man sets his mind on standing on some high place; he points to a pillar, and says that if he could ascend to its summit he would see from that lofty elevation glimpses of heaven, and he determines that he will stand upon that summit, whatever hazards he may incur. At length God grants him his request; and when the man has ascended to the eminence which he coveted, what does he find? Sand, sand, sand! Mile on mile of sand—sand for mile on mile! And now he wishes to descend; but how to get down is his great difficulty. There may be no way down but that which involves suicide. Yet the man was determined to reach that elevation; nothing could stand between him and his wish; he urged God to grant him his request; with importunate desire he besought that he might have his own way; and there is no punishment heavier than that which falls upon any man when God allows him to take his own course." God does much to lead men to forsake sin and follow holiness; he gave his own beloved Son as a sacrifice for the abolition of sin and the salvation of the sinner; he is working for these ends by many and powerful agencies; for these objects he will do everything that he can, everything that is consistent with his own holiness

and with the moral constitution which he has given to man. But one thing he will not do—he will not compel men to forsake their own evil ways and walk in his way of holiness. And if men were forced into righteousness of action, what would such righteousness be worth? The obedience which is not willing is mechanical, not moral. The goodness which is not hearty is in the sight of God but a dead and hypocritical form.

II. THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN GENERALLY ARISES OUT OF THE SIN ITSELF. "Wherefore I delivered her up into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of the Assyrians, upon whom she doted." "The cause which at last brought destruction on Israel was that the King of Assyria found conspiracies in Hosea, who was intriguing with Egypt at the same time that he acknowledged himself a tributary to Assyria (2 Kings xvii. 4)." Says Matthew Henry, "The neighbouring nations, whose idolatries she had conformed to and whose friendship she had confided in, and in both had affronted God, are now made use of as the instruments of her destruction. The Assyrians, on whom she doted, soon spied out the nakedness of the land, discovered her blind side, on which to attack her, stripped her of all her ornaments and all her defences, and so uncovered her, and made her naked and bare, carried her sons and daughters into captivity, slew her with the sword, and quite destroyed that kingdom and put an end to it. . . . And that the Assyrians, whom they had been so fond of, should be employed in executing judgments upon them, was very remarkable, and shows how God, in a way of righteous judgment, often makes that a scourge to sinners which they have inordinately set their hearts upon. The devil will for ever be a tormentor to those impenitent sinners who now hearken to him and comply with him as a tempter." "God excites those against us for punishment to please whom we had sinned." Scott says truly, "God commonly employs tempters to punish those who listen to them." And Shakespeare—

> "Heaven is most just, and of our pleasant vices
> Makes instruments to scourge us."

In the righteous government of God punishment is not arbitrarily annexed to sin: it grows out of the sin. As Hesiod observes, "The seeds of our own punishment are sown at the same time we commit sin." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," etc. (Gal. vi. 7, 8). If men will trust in riches or rank, in pleasure or power; if they will live for these things, their life will bear its appropriate fruit. These their gods will prove their ruin. Their hopes will be utterly disappointed, their lives deplorably impoverished and degraded, and their souls lost. Let us take heed to the object of our trust. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is," etc. (Jer. xvii. 7, 8).—W. J.

Ver. 27.—*A severe judgment and its satisfactory consequences.* "Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee, and thy whoredom brought from the land of Egypt," etc. The sin referred to in this verse is the idolatry of the people. Two of its clauses make this quite clear. "Thy whoredom brought from the land of Egypt; . . . thou shalt not lift up thine eyes unto them." The form of the idols which Jeroboam set up he derived from Egypt, where he had resided for some time. In setting up the golden calves at Bethel and Dan he "translated to Israelitish soil the worship which he had seen at Memphis and Heliopolis" (1 Kings xii. 26—36). And, what is more important for the elucidation of our text, which is addressed to the people of Judah, the whole Israelitish people brought with them their deep-rooted tendency to idolatry when they came out of Egypt. Two chief points are presented to our notice.

I. A JUDGMENT OF GREAT SEVERITY FOLLOWED BY SATISFACTORY CONSEQUENCES. God had already visited the kingdom of Israel with his judgments because of their idolatries. He had sent famine upon them (1 Kings xvii. 1; xviii. 1, 2); he had allowed them to suffer by the invasions of their enemies (2 Kings vi. 24—29; x. 32, 33; xiii. 3, 4, 7). Amos the prophet forcibly sets forth these visitations of Israel by reason of their sins (iv. 6—11). And as all these judgments failed to turn them from idolatry, the Lord suffered them to be carried captive into Assyria (2 Kings xvii. 3—6). These things should have been a warning to the people of Judah to keep clear of idolatry; yet they frequently lapsed into it. God had caused them also to suffer by reason of it (2 Kings xviii. 13—16; xxi. 1—15; xxiii. 31—35; xxiv. 1—4, 10—16). But these judgments did not cleanse the kingdom of Judah of idolatry. Checked for

a time, the sinful practice broke out vigorously again. And in consequence, the complete destruction of Jerusalem, the utter overthrow of the kingdom, and the captivity of the people, are declared to be at hand. And the text asserts that, by means of this severe judgment, the people would be finally and for ever freed from idolatry. And the result has proved the prophetic assertion true. One effect of the Captivity was the complete eradication of the tendency of the Jews to idolatry; "so that whereas, before the Captivity, no nation (all things considered) was more impetuously bent upon idols and idolatry than they were, after that Captivity no nation was more vehemently set against idols and idolatry than they were." The sin of idolatry is not limited to those who are called heathen. Dr. Thomas Guthrie says truly, "In a sense all men are idolaters. In the days of old, it is said that Egypt had more gods than men. Elsewhere than in Egypt, everywhere, as the Bible says, 'there be lords many and gods many.' The Hindu reckons his divinities by thousands and tens of thousands; yet the world has a larger pantheon—as many gods as it has objects, be they innocent or guilty, which usurp the place of Jehovah, and dethrone him in the creature's heart. Nor are men less idolaters if drunkards, though they pour out no libation to Bacchus, the god of wine; nor less idolaters, if impure, that they burn no incense at the shrine of Venus; nor less idolaters, if lovers of wealth, that they do not mould their god into an image of Plutus, and, giving a shrine to what lies hoarded in their coffers, offer it their morning and evening prayers. He has been an idolater, who, rebelling against Providence, follows the hearse of a coffined god; he made an idol of wife or child; and now, when the robber of all our homes has stolen these his gods away, and bears off his plunder to the grave, the feelings of that man's heart may be expressed in Micah's complaint to the Danite robbers, 'Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee?'" Let no one deem it strange if God should visit him for his idolatries. He may do so by forcibly removing the idol, by depriving the idolater of the riches which he has worshipped, or by taking to himself the child or other relative which has been made an idol. Or he may visit those who sin thus by making the idol the occasion of sharp sorrow or bitter trial, as when a child has been idolized by his parents, and grows up to "bring down their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." Blessed will it be if such visitation leads to the turning of the heart entirely to God.

II. A PROPHETIC PREDICTION WHICH WAS REMARKABLY FULFILLED. "Thus will I make thy lewdness to cease from thee," etc. "This prediction is frequently repeated; and the accomplishment of it has been most wonderful. It might have been expected that a nation, ever prone to idolatry in a country where the worship of the true God was established and none else tolerated, would have readily conformed to the idolatrous usages of the nations among whom they were scattered by the Captivity, and so have been incorporated with them. Yet neither the authority, the frowns, the examples, or the favour of their conquerors or powerful neighbours; nor their own fears, hopes, interests, or predilection for the sensual, jovial worship of idols, could prevail with them to run into gross idolatry, during the Captivity or afterwards! Nay, they were instrumental to the proselyting of numbers of idolaters to the worship of Jehovah, in the countries where they were dispersed" (Scott). This is certainly a remarkable fulfilment of prophetic prediction; and it furnishes: 1. *Evidence of the omniscience of God.* He clearly and certainly foresaw what the result of the Captivity would be in this respect. Such foreknowledge points to the omniscience of him who possesses it. "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me," etc. (Ps. cxxxix. 1—4). This knowledge should prove: (1) A restraint to the evil-doer. There is no possibility of sinning in secret (cf. Job xxxiv. 21, 22; Ps. xc. 8; Heb. iv. 13). (2) An inspiration and consolation to every one who trusts in God. "Our individual life," to use the words of Dr. Parker, "is all understood by him. That life is but dimly known to ourselves. We catch glimpses of it here and there, but its scope and meaning are still unrevealed to us. We are often in shadow. There are scattered rays of light, but no steady shining of the sun which protects us from the mystery of much darkness. It is enough that God knows our life, and that his wisdom is pledged as our defence. To-morrow is coming upon us, and we know not with what messages and revelations, with what joys and troubles; but God is coming with it, and in his path is the brightness of all-sufficient wisdom." 2. *Evidence of the Divine inspiration of the prophet.* The influence of past

judgments upon the people could not have led Ezekiel to have predicted such a result of the Captivity, but one of an opposite character. The character of the people and the circumstances of their captivity were not calculated to inspire a declaration like this. It could not have been the product of mere human genius in an exalted mood, or human foresight in a condition of intense activity. Such a prediction must have been communicated to the prophet by him to whom all things are known.

CONCLUSION. "Guard yourselves from idols."—W. J.

Vers. 38, 39.—*The exclusiveness of the worship of the Lord God.* "Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day," etc. The chief practical suggestions of our text may be arranged under three heads.

I. MEN INSTRUCTED IN THE TRUE RELIGION PRACTISING THE GREATEST ABOMINATIONS OF HEATHENISM. "They had slain their children to their idols" (ver. 39). "They have caused their sons, whom they bare unto me, to pass through the fire unto them to be devoured" (ver. 37). We have already noticed the offering of children to Moloch (on ch. xvi. 20, 21). And in this age and in this professedly Christian land people make sacrifices which bear some resemblance to these in spirit. How many respectable and avowedly Christian parents sacrifice their daughters in marriage to mammon! The man may be unsuitable in age, uncongenial in temper, immoral in character and conduct; but, if he be rich, he is welcomed as a suitor. How frequently, too, are the best and the abiding interests of children—their intellectual, spiritual, and eternal interests—risked, or even sacrificed, by their parents, in order that they may attain unto higher social status or gain worldly honours and distinctions! And in other ways practices which are worthy only of heathen intelligence and morality are at work amongst us.

II. MEN PASSING AT ONCE FROM THE PRACTICE OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF HEATHENISM INTO THE SANCTUARY AND SERVICE OF THE LIVING GOD. "When they had slain their children to their idols, then they came the same day into my sanctuary to profane it; and, lo, thus have they done in the midst of mine house." The Prophet Jeremiah complains of a similar sin: "Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye have not known; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my Name, and say, We are delivered; that ye may do all these abominations?" (Jer. vii. 9, 10). The sin is not unknown amongst us in these days. Men are on the race-course, with its cruelty, profanity, and gambling, on the weekday, and on Sunday they enter the sanctuary of God, and take part in its services. There are those who, during the week, visit scenes of drunkenness and profligacy, and on the Lord's day they go to church and unite in the forms of worship. It is an ill preparation for the sacred engagements of the house of God to spend the Saturday evening in the public-house, worshipping Bacchus. Nor is the character of the case much altered when persons attend church on Sunday morning, and spend the remainder of the day in social festivity and dissipation.

III. THAT SUCH CONDUCT IS A PROFANATION BOTH OF THE SABBATH AND THE SANCTUARY OF GOD. "Moreover this they have done unto me: they have defiled my sanctuary in the same day, and have profaned my sabbaths. For when they had slain their children to their idols," etc. We may show this by noticing: 1. *That these things should be held in reverence.* (1) Because they were instituted by God. He ordained the sabbath and the sanctuary. They rest upon the basis of Divine authority. (2) Because they were instituted for his glory. Both the sabbath and the sanctuary are for the worship of the Most High. Both are intended to promote the best interests of man, to elevate him as a spiritual and immortal being, and thus to enable him more fully to glorify God. As man grows in spiritual purity and power, in righteousness and kindness towards men, and in reverence and devotion towards God, his life contributes to the honour of God. The sabbath and the sanctuary, when properly used, further these ends. 2. *The conduct exhibited and condemned in the text is most irreverent in relation to these things.* (1) Because it puts the sanctuary and the sabbath on the low level of heathen institutions and customs. So did the people of Israel and of Judah. How many to-day attend religious services for no higher reason than this, that it is socially respectable to do so! (2) Because it disparages

them in the eyes of observers. If men form their opinion of religious services and ordinances from such persons as take part in them on Sunday, and during the rest of the week lead lives of a character which is in utter opposition to them, they must conclude that they are shams and unworthy of the regard of true men. (3) Because it is insulting to God. Such conduct implies that our outward and empty forms and ceremonies can please him, or that he will accept our attendance upon his worship as a compensation for our disregard of his will when we are absent from his house. "But the Lord looketh on the heart." He rejects the worship which is offered to him by such persons as hypocritical service and offensive to him (cf. Ps. l. 7—23; Isa. i. 11—15).

CONCLUSION. The worship of God is exclusive. "Thou shalt have none other gods before me;" "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve;" "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Let us cultivate decision and thoroughness in his service. How different from the conduct condemned in the text was that of Cyprian! On his way to martyrdom he was told by the emperor that he would give him time to consider if he had not better cast a grain of incense into the fire in honour of the idol-gods than die so ignominiously. Cyprian replied, "There needs no deliberation in the case." John Huss, at the stake, was offered a pardon if he would recant. His reply was, "I am here, ready to suffer death." Thomas Hawkes, in like circumstances, said, "If I had a hundred bodies, I would suffer them all to be torn in pieces, rather than recant." Let us seek to be alike true, whole-hearted, and firm in our allegiance to our Lord.—W. J.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Ver. 1.—In the ninth year. We pass from the date of ch. xx. 1 (B.C. 593) to B.C. 590, and the very day is identified with that on which the army of Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem (Jer. xxxix. 1; 2 Kings xxv. 1—12). To the prophet's vision all that was passing there was as plain as though he saw it with his own eyes. The siege lasted for about two years. The punishments threatened in ch. xxiii. had at last come near. We may probably infer that a considerable interval of silence had followed on the Aholah and Aholibah discourse. Now the time had come to break that silence, and it was broken, after the prophet's manner, by a parable. In the "rebellious house" we find, as in ch. ii. 3 and elsewhere, primarily Ezekiel's immediate hearers, secondarily the whole house of Israel as represented by them.

Vers. 3, 4.—Set on a pot, etc. The words contain an obvious reference to the imagery of ch. xi. 3—7. The people had used that imagery either in the spirit of a false security or in the recklessness of despair. It is now the prophet's work to remind them that the interpretation which he gave to their own comparison had proved to be the true one. The cauldron is the city, the fire is the invading army, the metal of the cauldron does not protect them. The **pieces, the choice bones,** were the princes and chief men of the people.

Ver. 5.—Burn also the bones under it; better, with the Vulgate and Revised Version, *pile the bones*. The bones of animals were often used as fuel. Currey quotes an interesting passage from Livingstone's 'Last Journal,' i. p. 347, narrating how, when the supply of ordinary fuel failed, he made his steamer work with the bones of elephants. See a like practice among the Scythians (Herod., iv. 61).

Ver. 6.—Scum. The word is not found elsewhere. The Authorized Version follows the Vulgate. Keil and the Revised Version give "rust." As the cauldron was of brass (ver. 11), this must have been the verdigris which was eating into the metal, and which even the blazing fire could not get rid of. The pieces that are to be brought out are the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who are to be carried into exile. There was to be "no lot cast," as was often done with prisoners of war, taking every tenth man (decimating) of the captives for death or exile (comp. 2 Sam. viii. 2). All alike were doomed (Joel iii. 3).

Ver. 7.—The parable is for a moment interrupted, and Jerusalem is the murderess who has shed blood, not where the earth might cover it (Job xvi. 18; Isa. xxvi. 21), but as on the top of a rock visible in the sight of all men.

Ver. 9.—We return to the image of the cauldron, and once again, as in ver. 6 and ch. xxii. 3 and xxiii. 37, we have the words which Nahum (iii. 1) had used of Nineveh applied to Jerusalem.

Ver. 10.—Spice it well; better, *make thick*

the broth (Revised Version). The verb is used in Exod. xxx. 33, 35, of the concoction of the anointing oil, and the cognate adjective in Job xli. 31 for the "boiling" of the water caused by the crocodile. We are reminded of the "bubble, bubble" of the witches' cauldron in 'Macbeth.'

Ver. 11.—**Then set it empty upon the coals, etc.** The empty cauldron is, of course, the city bereaved of its inhabitants. The fire must go on till the *rust* is consumed. There is, however, in spite of the seemingly terrible hopelessness of the sentence, a gleam of hope, as there had been in ch. xvi. 42. When the punishment had done its full work, then Jehovah might cause his fury to rest (ver. 13). Till then he declares, through the prophet, there will be no mitigation of the punishment. The word has gone forth, and there will be no change of purpose.

Ver. 12.—**She hath wearied herself with lies,** etc.; better, *it* (keeping to the image of the cauldron) *is worn out with labours; sc.* with the pains taken to cleanse it, and yet the rust remains. The fire must burn, the retributive judgment must continue, till the work is done.

Vers. 15—17.—**Behold, I take away from thee,** etc. The next word of the Lord, coming after an interval, is of an altogether exceptional character, as giving one solitary glimpse into the personal home life of the prophet. The lesson which the history teaches is, in substance, the same as that of Jer. xvi. 5. The calamity that falls on the nation will swallow up all personal sorrow, but it is brought home to Ezekiel, who may have read those words with wonder, by a new and terrible experience. We are left to conjecture whether anything in the prophet's home life furnished a starting-point for the terrible message that was now borne in upon his soul. Had his wife been ill before? or, as the words, **with a stroke,** suggest, did it fall on him, as a thunderbolt "out of the blue"? I mention, only to reject, the view that the wife's death belongs as much to the category of symbolic visions as the boiling cauldron. To me such a view seems to indicate an incapacity for entering into a prophet's life and calling as great as that which sees nothing but an allegory in the history of Gomer in Hos. ii., iii. We, who accept the Scripture record as we find it, may believe that Ezekiel was taught, as the earlier prophet, to interpret his work by his own personal experience. To Ezekiel himself the loss of one who is thus described as **the desire** (or, *delight*) **of his eyes** (the word is used of things in 1 Kings xx. 6, of young warriors in Lam. ii. 4, of sons and daughters in ver. 25), must have been, at first, as the crowning sorrow of his life; but the feelings of the patriot-prophet were stronger even than those of the husband, and his personal bereavement seemed as a small thing compared with the desolation of his country. He was to refrain from all conventional signs of mourning, from weeping and wailing, from the loud sighing (for **forbear to cry,** read, with the Revised Version, *sigh, but not aloud*), from the head covered or sprinkled with ashes (Isa. lxi. 3), and from the bare feet (2 Sam. xv. 30; Isa. xx. 2), from the covered lips (Lev. xiii. 45; Micah iii. 7), which were "the trappings and the garb of woe" in such a case. **Eat not the bread of men.** The words point to the custom, more or less common in all nations and at all times, of a funeral feast, like the *parentalia* of the Romans. Wine also was commonly part of such a feast (Jer. xvi. 7). The primary idea of the custom seems to have been that the mourner's friends sent the materials for the feast as a token of their sympathy.

Ver. 18.—**So I spake unto the people in the morning,** etc. In yet another way the calling of the prophet superseded the natural impulses of the man. He knew that his wife's hours were numbered, yet the day was spent, not in ministering at her deathbed, but in one last effort to impress the teachings of the time upon the seared consciences and hardened hearts of his countrymen and neighbours. I cannot help referring to the poem 'Ezekiel,' by B. M., published in 1871, as expressing the meaning of the history better than any commentary.

Ver. 19.—We must read between the lines what had passed in that eventful night of sorrow. The rumour must have spread among the exiles of Tel-Abib that the prophet had lost the wife whom he loved so tenderly. They were ready, we may imagine, to offer their consolations and their sympathy. And, behold, he appears as one on whom no special sorrow had fallen. But that strange outward hardness had the effect which it was meant to have. It roused them to ask questions, and it was one of the cases in which the *prudens interrogatio*, which if not in itself the *dimidium scientiæ*, at least prepared the way for it. The form of their question implies that they had a forecast that the strange conduct was, in some way, connected with the prophet's work. **Wilt thou not tell us what these things are to us?**

Ver. 21.—**The desire of your eyes.** There is something exquisitely pathetic in the iteration of the phrase of ver. 17. To the priest Ezekiel himself, to the people whom he addressed, the temple was as dear as the wife to the husband. It was also "the pride of their power" (Revised Version), the "pity of their soul" (margin). The former phrase comes from Lev. xxvi. 19.

When that temple should be profaned, when sons and daughters should fall by the sword, then they would do as the prophet had done. They would learn that there is a sorrow which is too deep for tears, something that passeth show. The state which the prophet describes is not one of callousness, or impenitence, or despair. The people shall mourn for their iniquities;" this will be the beginning of repentance. Lev. xxvi. 39, 40 was obviously in the prophet's thoughts. We note that ver. 24 is the one solitary passage since ch. i. 3 in which Ezekiel names himself. As single acts and gestures had before (ch. iv. 1—12) been a sign of what was coming, so now the man himself was to be in that hour of bereavement.

Vers. 26, 27.—Yet another sign was given, not to the people, but to the prophet himself. For the present there was to be the silence of unutterable sorrow, continuing, day after day, as there had been before (ch. iii. 26). Then there should come a messenger from Jerusalem, reporting its capture and destruction, and then his mouth should be opened. The messenger does not come till nearly three years afterwards (ch. xxxiii. 21); and we must infer that there was no spoken message during the interval, but that from ch. xxv. 1 onward we have the written words of the Lord that came to him from time to time, not as messages to Israel, but as bearing on the fate of the surrounding nations. We have, *i.e.*, what is, strictly speaking, a parenthesis in the prophet's work.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The seething-pot.* I. THE VESSEL. Jerusalem is compared to a seething-pot. The character of the city had certain points of resemblance. 1. *Unity.* All the parts are thrown into one vessel. There was a common life in the one city. All classes shared a common fortune. They who are united in sin will be united in doom. 2. *Vain protection.* The heat of the fire came through the vessel. The walls of Jerusalem did not save the doomed city. No earthly shelter will protect the guilty from the wrath of God. 3. *Fatal imprisonment.* The miserable inhabitants of Jerusalem were shut up to the horrible fate of a besieged city. There is no escape from the scene of Divine judgment. Indeed, the sufferings of a siege are worse than those of the open battle-field. They who hold out against God will be more miserably punished than those who meet him early.

II. THE CONTENTS OF THE VESSEL. 1. *Flesh.* The various joints of the butchered animal are flung into the seething-pot. They represent the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The punishment of sin falls on the persons of the sinners. "The soul that sinneth, *it* shall die." There is something humiliating in this comparison with mere joints of meat. The doomed sinner is in a degraded condition. His higher spiritual nature has been neglected and well-nigh lost. He appears as "flesh," and, having sunk into the lower life of flesh, he must expect to receive the treatment of flesh. Sowing to the flesh, he reaps corruption (Gal. vi. 8). 2. *The choice parts.* "The choice bones" are to be thrown into the seething-pot. The princes of Judah share the fate of their city; they are even selected for exceptional indignity and suffering. No earthly rank or wealth will save from the just punishment of sin. On the contrary, if large privileges have been abused, and high duties neglected, the penalty will be all the heavier.

III. THE FIRE. The seething-pot is to be put on a fire. Sin is punished by burning wrath. 1. *Suffering.* The symbol of fire certainly suggests pain, although we may dismiss the gross mediæval picture of actual physical flames belching forth from some subterranean volcano. 2. *Destruction.* The fire is to go on beyond its wonted task till all the water is dried up and the contents of the vessel are burnt. This is the final issue of the penalties of sin. At first they come in suffering. But if there is no amendment, and the lessons of chastisement are not taken to heart, the broad road leads to destruction (Matt. vii. 13), and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. vi. 23).

Ver. 2.—*Memorable days.* Ezekiel was to take note of the day on which he received a message concerning the approaching ruin of Jerusalem, as it was to be on the anniversary of that day that the King of Babylon would besiege Jerusalem. Thus it would be seen that the prediction was strikingly fulfilled. This is one instance of the marking of memorable days.

I. THE OCCURRENCE OF MEMORABLE DAYS. In themselves all days may be equally sacred (Rom. xiv. 5). Nevertheless, a difference of character, history, and associations will divide our days out into very various classes, and will mark some for especial interest. There are days that stand out in history like great promontories along the coast. We must all have lived through days the memory of which is burnt into our souls. There are the red-letter days, days of honour and gladness; and there are the black-letter days of calamity. Note some of the kinds of memorable days. 1. *Days of warning.* Such was the day of our text. We cannot afford to forget such days. They may occur but rarely; yet their influence should be permanent. 2. *Days of blessing.* If we have had times of exceptional prosperity, or occasions when we have been surprised with new and unexpected good, surely such happy seasons deserves to be chronicled. It is ungrateful to leave a blank in our diaries for those days. 3. *Days of sorrow.* These, too, may be days of blessing, though of blessing in disguise. It is not easy to forget such days, nor is it altogether desirable. The softened memory of past grief has a wholesome, subduing influence over the soul. 4. *Days of revelation.* The day to be noted by Ezekiel was of this character. We have no prophetic visions. But there may be days when God has seemed to draw especially near to us. Truth has then been most clear and faith most strong. The memory of such days is a help for the darker seasons of doubt and dreary solitude.

II. THE USE OF MEMORABLE DAYS. 1. *To chronicle them.* A diary of sentiments is not always a wholesome production; but a journal of events should be full of instruction. An almanack marked with anniversary dates is a constant reminder of the lessons of the past. 2. *To study them.* Dates are but sign-posts. They indicate events which require separate consideration. It is good sometimes to turn aside from the noisy scenes of the present and walk in the dim cloisters of the sweet, sad past, communing with bygone days and musing over the deeds of olden times. Our own rushing, heedless age would be the better for such meditations among the tombs, not to grow melancholy in the thought of death, but to learn wisdom in the lessons of the ages. 3. *To avoid their errors.* There are bad past days. Antiquity does not consecrate sin and folly. 4. *To follow their good example.* We have the whole roll of the world's history from which to select instances of inspiring lives. The Christian year is sacred to the memory of a holy past, and its anniversaries revive the lessons of good examples; chiefly it repeatedly reminds us of the great events in the life of our Lord. 5. *To be prepared for their recurrence.* The day of prophecy was anticipatory of the day of judgment. Past days of judgment point to the future judgment. "Of that day and of that hour knoweth no one," but the fulfilment of prophecy in the destruction of Jerusalem is a solemn warning of the sure fulfilment of predictions concerning the judgment on the whole world.

Ver. 12.—*A weary task.* Jerusalem is represented as endeavouring to remove her own evil, but as growing weary in the fruitless task. The rust cannot be cleansed from the vessel.

I. SIN ACTS LIKE RUST. 1. *It comes from a corroding agent.* Temptation bites into the yielding soul like an acid. 2. *It reveals an inferior character.* Brass and iron become rusty under circumstances which leave gold and silver untarnished. Readiness to yield to temptation is a sign that there is base metal in the soul. 3. *It corrupts the very substance of the soul.* Rust on metal is not like moss on stone, a mere excrescence and parasite growth. It is formed from the metal itself; it is a portion of it disintegrated and mixed with an alien body. Sin breaks down the fabric of the soul-life, and wears it away in a slow death. 4. *It tarnishes the beauty of the soul.* Rust is like ingrained dirt on the bright surface of the metal. The rusty mirror no longer reflects light. The sin-stained soul has lost its lustre and ceases to reflect the light of heaven.

II. MEN TRY TO REMOVE THE RUST OF SIN. This is the task that the people of Jerusalem are supposed to have undertaken. 1. *They turn from their past.* The atmosphere which caused the rust is abandoned. The old days are to be forgotten; a new life is to be commenced. 2. *They put their souls under discipline.* The attempt is made to burn off the rust or to scour it away. 3. *They offer compensation.* New deeds of goodness are to supersede and atone for old deeds of sin. 4. *They offer*

sacrifices of expiation. The history of religion is full of such sacrifices—sacrifices which constitute a leading element in the Old Testament economy.

III. THE ATTEMPT TO REMOVE THE RUST OF SIN IS A WEARY TASK. 1. *New circumstances do not destroy old sins.* Though the vessel be taken out of the damp atmosphere which first corroded it, it does not become bright. The rust is still on it. We may try to make amends in the future, but by such means we cannot get rid of the guilt and the consequences of the past. 2. *Sin has eaten its way so deeply into the soul that no efforts of ours can remove it.* It is not like dust that lies loosely on the surface; it has cut into our nature like rust. Our feeble self-discipline is ineffectual for removing so close-clinging an evil. 3. *No compensation of good works nor expiatory sacrifices will remove this evil.* "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin" (Heb. x. 4). Such sacrifices can be but symbols at the best.

IV. CHRIST HAS ACCOMPLISHED THIS WEARY TASK. 1. *He has made the great atonement with God.* He is the one true Sacrifice for sin (Heb. x. 14). Thus the way is now clear for the soul's cleansing. 2. *He removes the rust of sin from the soul.* As "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," Christ not only brings pardon, he produces purity. His mighty arm scours the rust off the soul. 3. *This was a weary task for Christ.* Even he found it no easy work. It required the humiliation of Bethlehem, the agony of Gethsemane, and the death of Calvary. Christ toiled, suffered, and grew weary unto death in the awful task. Yet he persevered to the end. 4. *Christ invites us to abandon our useless, weary task and come to him for cleansing.* It is especially to those who labour and are heavy laden with sin that he gives his great invitation (Matt. xi. 28—30).

Ver. 14 (first clause).—*God true to his word.* "I the Lord have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it."

I. THE SUPPOSITION THAT GOD MAY NOT BE TRUE TO HIS WORD. Certain observations and considerations shelter that supposition. 1. *The changefulness of life.* It looks as though things fell out by chance. We do not discern regular, orderly movements in Divine providence. 2. *The tardy fulfilment of threat and promise.* Both are delayed. Then men lose hold of both, and regard them as inoperative. 3. *A false idea of God's mercy.* It is thought that God must be too kind to execute his awful threatenings of wrath. 4. *Unbelief.* This condition of the souls of men is at the root of the error, and it is only by its existence that other considerations are laid hold of and made occasions for doubting God's certain performance of what he has foretold.

II. THE CERTAINTY THAT GOD WILL BE TRUE TO HIS WORD. This is based on important considerations. 1. *The constancy of God.* He is "the Eternal." Men vary, but God is changeless. What he wills to-day, he wills for ever. 2. *The perfect knowledge of God.* We may be forced to change our plans by reason of the discovery of new facts. A change in our circumstances may compel a change in our conduct. But God knows all things, and he has prevision of all future contingencies when he makes his promise. Of course, he acts in regard to changing events and the alteration of the characters of men. But these things are all foreknown, and where his action is concerned with them it is conditioned accordingly from the first. There is no surprise and consequent sudden turn. 3. *The power of God.* We may fail to keep our word from simple inability. A man may promise to pay a sum of money by a certain day, and, in the mean time, unforeseen misfortunes may rob him of the power to redeem his word. No such chances can happen with the Almighty. 4. *The mercy of God.* Archbishop Tillotson pointed out that God was not so bound to fulfil his threats as to keep his promises of grace, because men had a claim on the latter, but no one would claim the former. Nevertheless, it would not be merciful in God to torture us with warnings of a doom that was not impending. God does remit penalties. But then, from the first he has promised pardon to the penitent.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF GOD'S BEING TRUE TO HIS WORD. 1. *The vanity of unbelief.* It may be with us as it was in the days of Noah (Matt. xxiv. 37—39). But the judgment will not be the less certain because we refuse to expect it. 2. *The need of a sure refuge.* God has threatened judgment against sin. He will be true to his word. Then we should be prepared to face the day of wrath. Our only refuge is to "flee *from* God *to* God." 3. *The assurance of true faith.* God has given gracious

promises of pardon to his returning children (*e.g.* Isa. i. 18). He will certainly be as true to those promises as to any threatenings of wrath against the impenitent. The eternal constancy of God is a rock of refuge for his humble, repentant, trusting children.

Ver. 16.—"*The desire of thine eyes.*" I. A PICTURE OF DOMESTIC LOVE. Ezekiel's wife is called "the desire of his eyes." God has ordained marriage, and the blessedness of the true union of husband and wife is from him. It is in itself good and a source of further blessings. It is not the doctrine of the Bible that monkish celibacy is more holy than homely wedded love. 1. *The blessedness of wedded love is a solace in trouble.* If Ezekiel had a wife who could be described in the language of our text, it must have been refreshing for him to turn from the rancour of Jewish enmity to the sympathy of a true woman. The home is a sacred refuge from the storms of the world. 2. *Wedded love is a type of Divine love.* The Church is the bride of the Lamb. God loves his people as a true husband loves his wife. 3. *Such a great blessing should be tenderly guarded.* Wedded love may be hurt by want of thought as much as by want of heart. Small kindnesses constitute much of the happiness of life, and small negligences may make its cup very bitter. It needs care lest the bloom of love be ruthlessly brushed aside.

II. A STROKE OF FEARFUL TROUBLE. 1. "*The desire of his eyes*" *is taken from Ezekiel.* A prophet is not exempt from the greatest troubles that fall to the lot of men. Divine privileges do not save us from earthly sorrows. Love cannot hold the beloved for ever. The pair who love much may yet be parted. This awful grief of widowhood may invade the happiest home. They who are never divided in love may yet be thrust asunder by "the dark divorce of death." 2. *This trouble comes by a sudden stroke.* Sudden death seems to be best for the victim, for it spares all the agonies of a protracted illness, and all the horrors of the act of dying. But to those who are left it comes as an awful blow! Still, as such events do occur in the most affectionate and most peaceful households, we should do well to be prepared for them. The sweet summer garden of to-day may be a waste, howling wilderness to-morrow. 3. *The trouble comes from God.* Therefore it must be irresistible. On the other hand, it must be right. We cannot understand why so fearful a blow should fall. We can only say, "It is the Lord."

III. A REQUIREMENT OF UNNATURAL RETICENCE. Ezekiel is not to "mourn nor weep." Inwardly his grief cannot be stayed, for no man can escape from nature; but all outward signs of grief are to be suppressed. This is a hard requirement. 1. *Public men must repress private emotion.* Here is one of the penalties of a prominent position. The great duties must be performed as though nothing had happened. The leader of others must present a confident face to the foe, though his soul is wrung with despair. A smiling countenance must mask a breaking heart. 2. *Private sorrow is buried in public calamity.* The national disaster of Jerusalem is so huge that even the most terrible grief of sudden widowhood is not to be considered by the side of it. Grief is generally selfish; but what is one soul's agony to the misery of mankind? 3. *Divine judgments are not to be gainsaid.* Ezekiel's trouble is typical. Hengstenberg and others hold that he did not really lose his wife—that the story is but a parable. Even though we take it as history, we see that it is used as an illustration of the fate of the Jews. This was unanswerable. The penalty was deserved by the guilty nation. Guilt is silent. In all sorrow we have no right to reply to God. The psalmist says, "I was dumb" (Ps. xxxix. 2). Christ went to his cross in silence. "As a sheep," etc. (Isa. liii. 7). 4. *God has consolations for patient sorrow.* Though the mourner is silent, God is not, and his voice whispers peace to all his trusting sons and daughters in their sorrow.

Ver. 27.—*The dumb mouth opened.* I. THERE IS A TIME TO KEEP SILENCE. Ezekiel was not stricken dumb physically like Zacharias. He was silenced by circumstances and the will of God. Even a prophet may have to learn that "silence is golden." Consider the indications of the time to keep silence. 1. *When one has nothing to say.* It is a great mistake to speak because one ought to say something instead of waiting till there is something to be said. Prophets have not always messages to deliver.

Poets are not always inspired. 2. *When men will not hear.* Ezekiel's repeated discourses, and even his striking illustrative actions, had been treated with indifference by the Jews. It is useless to "cast pearls before swine." 3. *When events are speaking.* God says, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. xlvi. 10). The awful voice of providence silences every utterance of man. 4. *When we are called to reflect.* We have too much talking and too little thinking. This is an age of expression. We have lost the art of reticence. The consequence is shallowness and instability. More silence would allow of a richer brooding thoughtfulness.

II. EVENTS OPEN THE MOUTH OF THE SILENT. Ezekiel was to be silent in the grief of his sudden widowhood, and the Jews would be silenced by the frightful calamities of the siege of Jerusalem. Afterwards the prophet's lips would be unsealed, and he would be able to speak to better purpose. Events help to this result: 1. *In suggesting topics.* The truest thought is inspired by fact. New occurrences give rise to new lessons. The age of literature follows the age of action, and great books spring up in the soil that has been fertilized by great deeds. The facts of the gospel history are the chief topics for Christian preaching. The new scenes of the life of Christ and the Acts of the Apostles are the inspiration of all evangelistic speech. 2. *In inclining men to listen.* Ezekiel was silenced by indifference; he was to be rendered eloquent again by a newly awakened interest. Now, this change was to be brought about through the instrumentality of external events. Thus God breaks up the fallow ground and prepares the soil to receive the seed of the Word. 3. *In inducing faith.* This is the principal cause of the change in the present instance. The Jews had refused to believe Ezekiel. But when his words had been verified by the occurrence of the calamities he had predicted, the sceptical hearers would be forced to acknowledge that he was a true prophet. The fulfilments of Christ's prophecy in the growth of the kingdom from the grain of mustard seed to the great tree should incline people to listen to Christian teaching with faith.

III. THE WISE TEACHER WILL SEIZE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPEECH. His mission is to proclaim the will of his Master; and, though silence may be suitable on occasion, and room for thought is greatly to be desired, he must be on the watch for every opportunity of delivering his great message. It is a glorious time when inspired lips are unsealed. The mere babble of empty talk is not to be compared with such utterance. The Jews had it in the thunders of prophecy, and the early Christians in the gift of the cloven tongues. But every Christian teacher who has power to speak to his brother may receive Divine impulses which should give him words of helpfulness and healing. The great art is then to utter the word in season—the right word, to the right person, in the right spirit, at the right moment.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—14.—*The consuming cauldron.* The threatened judgment has at last descended upon the guilty city; and Ezekiel, far away in the land of the Captivity, sees in vision, and declares to his fellow-captives by a parable, the siege of Jerusalem now actually taking place. As in so many parts of his prophecies, Ezekiel reveals by symbol that which he has to communicate. Opinions differ as to whether the cauldron was actually filled with the joints of animals and was actually heated by a fire. But the familiar operation, whether literally performed or merely imagined and described, served vividly to portray to the mind the calamities which were befalling the doomed metropolis.

I. THE SIN OF THE CITY. As described in this passage, the errors of Jerusalem may be classified under three headings. 1. *Lies.* By which we must understand the corruption, the deceits and frauds, the political insincerity, which had eaten away the very heart of the citizens. 2. *Lewdness.* Or the prevalence of sensual sins and of carnal luxury, opposed to that purity and simplicity of domestic life in which the moral health of a nation ever consists. 3. *Blood-guiltiness.* Or violence and murder, which at this time were rife in Jerusalem, each man seeking his own interests, even at the expense of the life of his neighbours. These three classes of iniquity are chosen by the prophet as peculiarly heinous and obtrusive, not as exhausting, but simply as exemplifying, the city's sinfulness.

II. THE JUDGMENT OF THE CITY. As the flesh and bones are placed in the cauldron, and boiled and seethed by the fire being applied beneath, so the inhabitants of Jerusalem are enclosed within the walls, the besieging army surrounds them, and the citizens are abandoned to all the privations and fears and sufferings, and finally to the destruction, incident to so miserable a condition. The instrument of chastisement is appointed to be the nation into whose idolatries Judah had been seduced, the nation whose protection might for a time have availed to avert further evils, had not the catastrophe been hastened by the treachery and rebellion of prince and people. The Divine Judge never lacks instruments for the carrying out of his own purposes. "Heap on wood; kindle the fire!"

III. THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY. Previous punishment has been of the nature of chastisement, of correction; this is of the nature of consuming. All the calamities which have come upon Jerusalem have failed to produce true repentance and radical reformation; it remains now to execute the threats and to complete the ruin foretold. The language coming from the Almighty Ruler, who had taken Jerusalem under his especial patronage and care, is frightful indeed. "I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God." It is evident that the purpose of God is this—that the era of rebellion shall come to an end, that there must be a break in the continuity of the national life, that a future revival must be a new beginning unaffected for evil by the habits and traditions of the past. To this end the people and all their ways and practices, all their rebellions and idolatries, all their oppressions and immoralities, must first be cast into the cauldron of judgment, and many must be consumed and destroyed.—T.

Ver. 13.—*Ineffectual discipline.* Men who are providentially entrusted with the care and training of the young, or with the probation of undisciplined members of society, often have reason to complain that their endeavours seem to be utter failures, that there is no response to the appeal which by language and by action they are constantly addressing to those who are placed beneath their charge. It is very instructive to all such to observe what was the result of Jehovah's dealing with Judah and Jerusalem. It is not to be disputed that the results in question were perfectly known to the Omniscient before they came to pass. Yet it seemed good to him, in dealing with moral agents, to afford them the means of repentance, and to furnish them with inducements to repentance. Lamentable is the record of what without irreverence we may term the Divine experience: "I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged."

I. DIVINE DISCIPLINE. There is presumed the need for such discipline. It is because the metal is mixed with dross that it is cast into the furnace. It is because the patient is sick that medicine is administered. It is because the wheat and the chaff are intermingled that the winnowing-fan is employed. And it is because the heart and life of the individual or the nation are contaminated with evil that the chastening hand of God intervenes to purge away the mischief—the dross, the chaff. The means employed is usually affliction in some one or more of the many forms it assumes. One heart is reached in one way, another by a way altogether different; one nation is humbled by pestilence or famine, another by defeat in war and privation of territory.

II. THE MOTIVE AND PURPOSE OF DIVINE DISCIPLINE. To the careless observer it may seem as if such experiences as those described were evidences of malevolence in the Governor of the world. But in fact it is otherwise. "Whom he loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every child whom he receiveth." The son does not always understand his father's treatment of him, and does not always accept that treatment with submission and gratitude; neither does he always profit by it as he might do. Yet the treatment may be wise and well adapted for purposes alike of probation and of education; and the time may come when, looking back with enlarged experience and maturer judgment, he may approve his father's action. So is it with God's dealing with his great family. The Father of the spirits of all flesh has at heart the welfare of his offspring, his household. He knows that uninterrupted prosperity would not be beneficial, that many lessons could never be acquired amid circumstances of ease and enjoyment, that character could not by such experience be formed to ripeness and moral strength. It is through trials and afflictions that true men are fashioned. And

the same is the case with nations. Israel had to wander and to fight in the wilderness. England has only reached her present position by means of many generations of conflict and many epochs of adversity. God has "purged" his people, not because he is indifferent to their sufferings, but because he is solicitous for their welfare, which only through sufferings can be achieved.

III. THE APPARENT FAILURE OF DIVINE DISCIPLINE. There is a pathetic tone in the assertion, "I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged." The explanation of this failure is to be found in the mysterious fact of human liberty. An eminent philosopher has said that he would be content to be wound up like a clock every morning, if that would ensure his going right throughout the day. Determinism is mechanism; it reduces man to the level of a machine. But this is not the true, the Divine idea of man. God evidently designs to do something better with man than to constrain him. He even gives to man the prerogative of resisting the high motives which he in wisdom and mercy brings to bear upon him. And when he perceives that the purposes of discipline are not fulfilled, he laments, "I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged." Yet it is not for us to say that even in such cases there has been real failure. Ends may be answered of which we cannot judge; good may be done which we cannot see; preparation may be making for advanced stages which we are now incapable of comprehending. Doubtless in many cases the "purging" which is ineffectual here and now will be brought about hereafter, and perhaps above. It is open to us to believe, with the poet—

> "That nothing walks with aimless feet,
> That not one life shall be destroyed
> Or cast as rubbish to the void,
> When God has made his work complete."

T.

Vers. 15—27.—*Speechless and tearless sorrow.* If the event here described really happened, and if the death of the prophet's wife was a fact and not a mere vision or parable, at all events there is no reason to suppose that this death took place from other than natural causes. Foreseeing what would happen, the God of men and of nations used the affliction of his servant and turned it to account, making it the occasion and the means of spiritual instruction and impression for the benefit of the Hebrew community. The decease of Ezekiel's wife symbolized the fate of the guilty Jerusalem. It was—

I. SUDDEN AND UNEXPECTED. The Lord took away from the prophet the desire of his eyes "with a stroke." How touching is the prophet's record!—"At even my wife died." It is the simplicity of truth, the simplicity of submission, which speaks in this language. The terms Ezekiel employs show how great was his love and attachment to his wife; all the more was this sudden bereavement a shock of distress and anguish to him. Similarly swift was the stroke of retribution and ruin which came upon the Jewish metropolis. Notwithstanding repeated warnings and threatenings, the Israelites would not believe that their beloved Jerusalem, "the joy of the whole earth," could fall before the mighty conqueror from the east. But their confidence was misplaced, and their pride was destined to humiliation. The deathstroke came, and it came with the sharpness and suddenness which corresponded with the prophet's bereavement.

II. SEVERE. No affliction which could befall Ezekiel could be so distressing and so crushing as the loss of his beloved wife. In this it was emblematical of the blow which was about to descend upon Jerusalem. "Behold," said the Lord, "I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth." Patriotism, historical associations, religious pride, and other elements of feeling conspired to render their metropolis dear to the sons of Abraham; and its destruction and the dispersion of its citizens could not be contemplated by them without the liveliest emotions of anguish and anxiety. No heavier blow could fall upon them than this. Distress, as of the bereaved and desolate, must needs take possession of every true Hebrew heart, when predictions of Divine wrath were fulfilled, when the heathen entered and possessed the sanctuary of Jehovah.

III. INEVITABLE AND IRREPARABLE. Life is in the hands of the Lord and Giver of life. When he recalls his gift, his creatures can do nothing but submit. So Ezekiel

himself acknowledged and felt; it was God who deprived him of the desire of his eyes. The dead return not to their place, which knows them no more. This fact gives keenness to the sorrow, whilst it aids submission. Ezekiel's fellow-countrymen were to learn that it was the Divine purpose to inflict upon Jerusalem the last indignity. No human power could avert, and no human power could repair, this evil, any more than such power could save or restore the life which the Creator resumed. A new career might indeed open up before the people of Israel, but the old career was closed peremptorily and irrecoverably.

IV. CRUSHING EVEN TO SILENCE. Ezekiel was bidden, when his bereavement came upon him, to refrain from weeping and mourning, and from all the outward signs of grief. Distressing and difficult as the command certainly was, it was obeyed. And the prophet's obedience to it was significant. When the day of Judah's trouble came, it came in such a manner and with such circumstances accompanying it that the survivors and spectators of the national calamity were rendered speechless through grief. Their experience reminds us of the memorable language of the psalmist, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." There is a time to be silent. When the hand of God is heavy upon those who have resisted his laws and rebelled against his authority, they have nothing wherewith to answer their righteous Lord whom they have offended. It is for them to refrain from complaint, which in such a case would be merely blasphemy; it is for them to bow beneath the rod; it is for them, in silence and in speechless bitterness of heart, to repent of all their sins. It is the Lord: "Behold, here am I; let him do to me as seemeth good unto him."—T.

Ver. 24.—*Ezekiel a sign.* This prophet was commissioned to utter many words and to perform many actions which were of the nature of signs to Israel. But in this verse, by God's own instruction, Ezekiel is directed, not to show, but *to be, a sign* to the people. In his own person, in his own remarkable experience, he typified great truths.

I. IN THE AFFLICTION WHICH BEFELL HIM.

II. IN THE ANGUISH WHICH HE EXPERIENCED.

III. IN HIS SILENT SUBMISSION TO DIVINE APPOINTMENTS.

IV. IN HIS UNCOMPLAINING OBEDIENCE TO DIVINE BEHESTS.

V. IN HIS DESIRE AND RESOLUTION, BY ALL HIS EXPERIENCE AND ACTION, TO GLORIFY GOD.

APPLICATION. There are occasions when a good man can do little in the way of directly benefiting or influencing the ungodly by whom he may be surrounded. But even in such circumstances he may be a witness to God, and he may render service to his fellow-men, by his own life, and especially by his demeanour in times of affliction and trial.—T.

Vers. 1—14.—*The interior mechanism of war.* The prophet is commissioned to employ another homely metaphor. The patience and ingenuity of God's love are inexhaustible. The homeliest imagery is employed with a view to vivid and abiding impression. Here it is shown that behind all the machinery and circumstance of war, a hand Divine directs and overrules. A moral force resides within the material and human agency.

I. THE NECESSITY FOR THE SCOURGE. The necessity arose from the excessive criminality of the Jewish people. 1. *They are described as a "house of rebellion."* The authority of Jehovah was trampled in the dust. 2. *Jerusalem was a city of blood.* Justice was so grossly maladministered that the guilty escaped; the innocent were judicially murdered. 3. *Sin assumed the most flagrant forms.* "In thy filthiness is lewdness." All restraint to vice was cast off. All moral vigour was eaten out with self-indulgence. 4. *There had been wanton abuse of God's corrective methods.* "I purged thee, and thou wast not purged." Costly remedies had been wasted and scorned. The hand of the great Physician had been withstood. This is the culmination of guilt. The condition of such is hopeless.

II. THE CERTAINTY OF THE SCOURGE. "I the Lord have spoken: it shall come, and I will do it." The event was based upon the word of God, and God's word is the forthputting of his will. He puts himself into his speech. Fulfilment of his word is not only invariable as law; fulfilment is a necessity. But further, the scourge had

already come. By prophetic inspiration Ezekiel knew that on that identical day on which he spoke to the people in Chaldea, Nebuchadnezzar lay siege to Jerusalem. The verification of this fact would impart a weight of authority to Ezekiel's mission as a prophet of Jehovah. It was now too late to evade, by repentance, the scourge. Still, the moral lesson would be healthful. It is never unseasonable to be assured of the righteous faithfulness of God.

III. THE SEVERITY OF THE SCOURGE. The truth intended to be conveyed by this singular and striking figure is that of entire and indiscriminate destruction. Chastisements less drastic in their nature had been tried in vain; and, as the evil seemed to be ingrained in the very nature of the body politic, no other measure was availing than overwhelming disaster. This is represented by keeping the cauldron on the fire till its contents were evaporated. To men this punishment appears severe, but to those intelligences who stand near God's throne the punishment does not appear such an evil as does the sin. No punishment is equal to the hatred of man's heart toward God. Calamity that is external to the man is not such a curse as the sin in the soul. This inward canker is the heaviest of all catastrophes.

IV. THE THOROUGHNESS OF THE SCOURGE. "I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent, saith the Lord" (ver. 14). Every piece of flesh was to be brought out for the foe; no exemption was to be allowed. Even the scum was to be consumed. The very rust upon the cauldron was to be burnt off. In other words, the city itself was to be destroyed as well as the inhabitants—the institutions, political and religious, as well as nobles and priests. God's cleansing will be thorough. In God's esteem there are no small sins. Only give them time, and small sins become great. Therefore, no sin must be spared. God is represented, in one place, as "searching Jerusalem with candles" in order to discover her secret sins. Over the gateway of the new Jerusalem it shall be written, "Nothing that is defiled, or that worketh abomination, can enter herein!" And unless sin be separated from us, we and our sins must be destroyed together. Light and darkness cannot dwell in the same room at the same moment; nor can sin and holiness. The God of righteousness will exterminate sin root and branch.

V. THE HIDDEN HAND THAT WIELDS THE SCOURGE. Ordinary observers of the invasion of Judæa, and of the overthrow of Jerusalem, saw only the activity of man. To them it would seem only a human quarrel. Human ambition on the one side, and violation of treaties upon the other, appeared as the immediate causes of the war. To military captains, I dare say the probability of success was on the side of the besieged. The walls were strong and high; the natural ramparts were almost inaccessible; the gates had withstood many a foe. Yet there was a factor in that martial business that was not apparent. The mightiest agent was out of sight. All the forces of righteousness were on the side of Nebuchadnezzar. He had been commissioned to this undertaking by the invincible God. At what point, or in what way, the directing and controlling will of Jehovah acted upon the mind of the Babylonian king, we cannot say. But that God did move him to this undertaking, and did give him success, is a plain fact. Even men of the world are the sword in the hand of God.—D.

Vers. 15—27.—*Graduated lessons.* Most important truths can only be learnt by a series of comparisons. We best know the magnitude of the sun by comparison with the moon and stars. We prize the fragrance of the rose by comparison with the perfume of other flowers. We learn the dignity and strength that belong to a man by passing through the stages of childhood and youth. God teaches us and trains us, not only through the understanding, but also through the feelings, affections, griefs, inward experiences. Every event that occurs is a lesson for the immortal life.

I. GRIEF FOR THE LOSS OF A WIFE IS NATURAL. A wife occupies a more central place in a man's heart than any other among humankind. God himself has ordained that this mutual affection shall transcend all other. It is a relationship born of mutual choice. In proportion to this depth and intensity of affection is the sense of loss when death occurs. To suffer anguish of heart at such a time accords with the laws and instincts of nature. It is a loss not to be measured by words, and in proportion to the sense of loss is the abundance of the grief.

II. MAN'S CAPACITY FOR FEELING GRIEF IS LIMITED. Every capacity of the soul of man has, on earth, limitation. Whether this will continue when released from the

trammels of the flesh is not known. In all likelihood, capacity of mind and feeling will be enlarged, but will still be limited. If grief be indulged for minor losses, the soul will have no power of grief remaining for heavier demands. Therefore effort of will should be employed to restrain, and not to excite, our grief. Those who weep over imaginary sorrows portrayed in novels often become callous in the presence of real distress. The fountain of grief is exhausted.

III. REAL GRIEF SHOULD BE RESERVED FOR OUR HEAVIEST CALAMITIES. Because, if we allow the severest disasters to occur without an adequate sense of sorrow, we do our moral nature an injury; we do injury to others. We convey to men a wrong impression. We emphasize the less important matters. The result is that our nature gets out of harmony with God's nature—a disaster the heaviest of all. Then God's lessons are lost upon us. We become incapable of receiving good. We are "past feeling." To lose feeling is to lose enjoyment—is to endure diminished life.

IV. SIN SO OUTWEIGHS ALL OTHER CALAMITIES THAT OUR CHIEF SORROW SHOULD BE RESERVED FOR SIN. God forbade Ezekiel to weep for the loss of his wife. He forbade the Hebrews to exhibit signs of mourning for the fall and ruin of their temple. "But," he added—"but ye shall pine away for your iniquities, and mourn one toward another." All other disaster is external to a man. This disaster, sin, is internal and injures the very texture and fabric of his soul. This is without question "sorrow's crown of sorrow." A man belonging to the criminal class obtained an interview with a Christian gentleman. Replying to questions, the man told his sad history—his gradual lapse into crime, his ultimate detection. Said he, "I have been twice in gaol; I have endured all kinds of misery; but I confess that my worst punishment *is in being what I am now.*" This is the cardinal truth set forth by Ezekiel—that sin is the sum of all disasters, the quintessence of hell. Hatred of God is man's curse.

V. A GOOD MAN IS A SIGN TO THE UNGODLY, OF UNSEEN REALITIES. "Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign." A sign is an index of unseen things. Smoke is the sign of fire. A sword is the sign of hostility. An English ensign is an index of the queen's authority. A good man's life is a "sign" or proof that there is a God, and that God is the Friend of man. The purity and piety of a good man is an index of the transforming grace of God. The peace in a good man's heart is an index of the peace of God—the peace of heaven. The obedience of a good man is an index of God's gracious authority. The resignation of a good man under trouble is a sign of the superiority of heavenly good to earthly. Every good man is a sign and witness for God.—D.

Vers. 1—14.—*The parable of the cauldron; or, the judgment upon Jerusalem.* "Again in the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, the word of the Lord came unto me," etc. The interpretation of the chief features of this parable is not difficult. "The cauldron is Jerusalem. The flesh and the bones that are put therein are the Jews, the ordinary inhabitants of the city and the fugitives from the country. The fire is the fire of war. Water is poured into the cauldron, because in the first place only the inhabitants are regarded, not the city as such. Afterwards, where the cauldron only is intended, it is set on empty (ver. 11). The bones, in ver. 4, in contradistinction to the pieces of flesh, are those who lend support to the body of the state—the authorities, with the king at their head" (Hengstenberg). The precise meaning of one clause is controverted. "Burn also the bones under it" (ver. 5); Revised Version, "Pile also the bones under it." The interpretation of Fairbairn appears to us to be correct: "What the prophet means is that the best, the fleshiest parts, full of the strongest bones, representing the most exalted and powerful among the people, were to be put within the pot and boiled; but that the rest, the very poorest, were not to escape: these, the mere bones as it were, were to be thrown as a pile beneath, suffering first, and, by increasing the fire, hastening on the destruction of the others." A remarkable confirmation and illustration of this interpretation is quoted in the 'Speaker's Commentary' from Livingstone's 'Last Journal:' "When we first steamed up the river Shirè, our fuel ran out in the elephant marsh where no trees exist. Coming to a spot where an elephant had been slaughtered, I at once took the bones on board, and these, with the bones of a second elephant, enabled us to steam briskly up to where wood abounded. The Scythians, according to Herodotus, used the bones of the animal sacrificed to boil the flesh; the Guachos of South America do the same when they

have no fuel; the ox thus boils himself." The parable and its interpretation as given by Ezekiel suggest the following observations.

I. THE TIME FOR THE EXECUTION OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENTS MAY SEEM TO MEN TO BE LONG DELAYED, BUT ITS ARRIVAL IS CERTAIN. (Vers. 1, 2.) This judgment against Jerusalem had been spoken of by the prophets for a long time. The people of that city had refused to believe in its approach; but now it has actually commenced. "The King of Babylon set himself against Jerusalem this same day." But notice: 1. *The minuteness of the Divine knowledge of the beginning of the judgment.* "In the ninth year, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month," etc. (vers. 1, 2; and cf. 2 Kings xxv. 1). The very day, yea, the hour and the moment, when Nebuchadnezzar began the siege were known unto God. Nothing is hidden from him (cf. 2 Kings xix. 27; Ps. cxxxix. 1—4; Matt. ix. 4; John ii. 24, 25; Heb. iv. 13). 2. *The communication of this knowledge to Ezekiel.* Here on a particular day, which is clearly specified and set down in writing, the prophet announced to his fellow-exiles that Nebuchadnezzar had begun to besiege Jerusalem. "The place on the Chebar where the prophet lived," says J. D. Michaelis, "was distant from Jerusalem more than a hundred German miles; it was therefore impossible for Ezekiel to know by human means that the siege of Jerusalem had commenced on that day; and when it was afterwards ascertained that the prediction had exactly corresponded with fact, it would be regarded as an invincible proof of his Divine mission." 3. *The minute record of the fact.* "Son of man, write thee the name of the day, even of this selfsame day." When this prophecy was found to be exactly true, the record of it would rebuke the people for their unbelief of the prophet, and witness to the Divine inspiration and authority with which he spake. But to revert to our main point, the apparent delay of a Divine judgment does not affect its certainty. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." God's visitation because of persistent sin is certain, and it will take place at the precise time appointed by God. With what remarkable iteration and emphasis is this awful certainty expressed in the fourteenth verse! "I the Lord have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent" (cf. Numb. xxiii. 19; 1 Sam. xv. 29). God's threatenings of punishment will as surely be fulfilled as his promises of blessing.

II. IN THE EXECUTION OF HIS JUDGMENTS GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS. "Set on the cauldron, set it on, and also pour water into it; gather the pieces thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill it with the choice bones. Take the choice of the flock." Thus the prophet teaches that the great ones of Judah and Jerusalem—the king, the princes, the nobles—would suffer in this judgment. There is another expression which points to the same conclusion: "No lot is fallen upon it" (ver. 6). In former visitations some had been taken captive and others left. So it was when Jehoiakim and when Jehoiachin were taken away (2 Kings xxiv.; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 1—10). But in this case the judgment was to fall upon all without distinction. "There is no respect of persons with God." He is a Respecter of character, but not of persons. No outward rank or riches, no distinctions of place or power, nor anything in man's secular circumstances or condition, can exempt him from the stroke of God's anger in the day when he visits a people for their sins.

III. WHEN WICKEDNESS HAS BECOME FLAGRANT, THE DIVINE JUDGMENT WILL BE NOT LESS CONSPICUOUS. "For her blood is in the midst of her; she set it upon the bare rock; she poured it not upon the ground, to cover it with dust; that it might cause fury to come up to take vengeance, I have set her blood upon the bare rock, that it should not be covered." Blood upon the bare rock is here mentioned in contradistinction to blood shed upon the earth, which is absorbed by it, or which is covered and concealed with dust. There is, perhaps, as Hengstenberg suggests, a reference to the judicial murders which were perpetrated in Jerusalem, of which that of the Prophet Urijah is an example (Jer. xxvi. 10—23). But there certainly is set forth the notorious wickedness of the people of Jerusalem and Judah. They were "distinguished by the openness and audacity with which they sinned." The conspicuousness of their wickedness would manifest the righteousness of the judgment of God; and it would lead to an equal conspicuousness in the infliction of that judgment. She had poured out blood "upon the bare rock," and God would "set her blood upon the bare rock."

In the administration of the Divine government there is a close relation and proportion between sin and its punishment. "It is fit," says Matthew Henry, "that those who sin before all should be rebuked before all, and that the reputation of those should not be consulted by the concealment of their punishment who were so impudent as not to desire the concealment of their sin."

IV. WHEN WICKEDNESS HAS BECOME UTTERLY INVETERATE, THE TIME FOR THE EXECUTION OF JUDGMENT HAS COME. Several things in the text indicate the inveteracy of the wickedness of the people. The scum or rust of the cauldron was not cleansed (vers. 6, 12); so the cauldron shall be put empty upon the fire, that the rust may be burnt away (ver. 11). J. D. Michaelis explains this verse: "When verdigris has eaten very deeply into it, copper is made red-hot in the fire, and cooled in water, when the rust falls off in scales. It can be partially dissolved by the application of vinegar. Only one must not think of a melting away of the rust by the fire, since in that case the copper would necessarily be melted along with it. Also through the mere heating the greater part can be loosened, so that it can be rubbed off." But here it seems that both the cauldron and the rust are to be consumed; both Jerusalem and its guilty inhabitants are to be destroyed. Nothing will avail to cleanse them but the fierce fires of stern retribution. Another evidence of the exceeding wickedness of the people is the application to them of the word translated "lewdness." זִמָּה means "deliberate wickedness," wickedness meditated and planned. For such wilful and studied evil-doing there remained but judgment. "All measures of a less extreme kind," says Fairbairn, "had been tried in vain; those were non-exhausted; and as the iniquity appeared to be entwined with the whole fabric and constitution of things, nothing remained but to subject all to the crucible of a severe and overwhelming catastrophe. This is represented by keeping the cauldron on the fire till its contents were stewed away, and the very bones burnt. And as if even this were not enough, as if something more were necessary to avenge and purge out such scandalous wickedness, the cauldron itself must be kept hot and burning till the pollution should be thoroughly consumed out of it. The wicked city must be laid in ruins (cf. Isa. iv. 4). . . . In plain terms, the Lord was no longer going to deal with them by half-measures; their condition called for the greatest degree of severity compatible with their preservation as a distinct and separate people, and so the indignation of the Lord was to rest on them till a separation was effected between them and sin."

V. THAT THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD ARE RETRIBUTORY IN THEIR CHARACTER. "According to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God." (We have already noticed this aspect of the Divine judgments in our treatment of ch. vii. 3, 4; ix. 10; xvi. 43.)—W. J.

Vers. 15, 16.—*A sudden and sorrowful bereavement.* "Also the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes," etc. The death of the prophet's wife is introduced here as a type of the calamities which were impending over Jerusalem and its inhabitants. We believe that her death was a fact, and not merely "a vividly drawn figure" designed to set forth the more impressively the overwhelming troubles which were coming upon the Jews. We may notice, in passing, that the fact that Ezekiel had a wife suggests the unscripturalness of the papal dogma of the celibacy of the clergy. Moses was most eminent as a prophet, and he was married (Exod. ii. 21, 22). So also was his brother Aaron, the high priest. Samuel the seer and judge was married (1 Sam. viii. 1, 2); and St. Peter (Matt. viii. 14). St. Paul claimed for himself the "right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas" (1 Cor. ix. 5). And he writes of the prohibition of marriage as a "doctrine of demons" (1 Tim. iv. 1—3). Regarding the death of the wife of the prophet as a real actual occurrence, we propose to consider it at present apart from its typical significance. We notice—

I. THE REMOVAL OF A BELOVED RELATIVE BY DEATH. "Son of man, behold, I take away . . . the desire of thine eyes." This undoubtedly refers to the wife of Ezekiel; and this mode of speaking of her indicates the high esteem and tender affection in which she was held by her husband. "A good wife," says Jeremy Taylor, "is Heaven's last best gift to man—his angel and minister of graces innumerable—his gem of many

virtues—his casket of jewels. Her voice is sweet music; her smile, his brightest day; her kiss, the guardian of his innocence; her arms, the pale of his safety, the balm of his health, the balsam of his life; her industry, his surest wealth; her economy, his safest steward; her lips, his faithful counsellors; her bosom, the softest pillow of his cares; and her prayers, the ablest advocates of Heaven's blessing on his head." The sacred Scriptures, especially in the New Testament, represent the love which the husband should bear towards his wife as being of the closest, tenderest, holiest kind (Eph. v. 25—33). When a man has a good wife, who is to him the desire of his eyes, and she is taken from him by death, great is his loss and sore his sorrow. "The death of a man's wife," says Lamartine, "is like cutting down an ancient oak that has long shaded the family mansion. Henceforth the glare of the world, with its cares and vicissitudes, falls upon the old widower's heart, and there is nothing to break their force or shield him from the full weight of misfortune. It is as if his right hand were withered; as if one wing of his angel was broken, and every movement that he made brought him to the ground. His eyes are dimmed and glassy, and when the film of death falls over him, he misses those accustomed tones which have smoothed his passage to the grave." How frequently are beloved relatives removed by death! At one time it is the true wife and tender mother. At another, it is the faithful husband and the wise and loving father. Again, it is the beloved and beautiful child.

II. THE REMOVAL OF A BELOVED RELATIVE BY DEATH SUDDENLY. "I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke." The wife of Ezekiel did not suffer long from any illness, she had no antecedent affliction which tended to prepare him for her removal, but was snatched away as it were in a moment. It is not unfrequently the case that our beloved are taken from us without any warning or without any anticipation of their removal. By virulent disease, by public calamity, by private accident, men are taken away with a stroke. This renders the suffering of the survivors more severe. If the life had slowly faded away, they would in a moment have been prepared for its departure. When there is a protracted affliction, the hearts of those who are soon to be bereaved nerve themselves for the last separating stroke when it shall come. The idea of the parting to some extent familiarizes itself to the mind. But in cases of sudden death there is no such preparation for the trial. And the stroke sometimes stuns the bereaved by its unlooked-for force, sometimes overwhelms their hearts with sorrow, and sometimes drives them into half-madness.

III. THE REMOVAL OF A BELOVED RELATIVE BY DEATH SUDDENLY BY GOD. "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke." The agent in the removal of the prophet's wife is here said to be neither disease, nor accident, nor chance, nor fate, but the Lord himself. This is the general teaching of the Bible as to man's decease (cf. Job i. 21; xiv. 5, 20; Ps. xxxi. 15; lxviii. 20; xc. 3, 5; civ. 29; Rev. i. 18). In the fact which we are considering there is: 1. *Deep mystery.* Why does God take away our beloved ones with a stroke? Why does he not grant us at least some intimation and preparation for the coming trial? We cannot tell. But he says unto us, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt understand hereafter." 2. *Divine instruction.* The fact should teach us important lessons; *e.g.*: (1) Not to place too much reliance on creatures, however wise and good and beloved (cf. Ps. cxlvi. 3, 4; Isa. ii. 22; 1 Cor. vii. 29). (2) To live in a state of preparedness for death. He who lives a truly Christian life will not be found unprepared whenever death shall come to him (cf. Phil. i. 21). (3) To acknowledge God as the Sovereign of our life. This is manifestly our duty and our interest. 3. *Rich comfort.* God is all-wise, perfectly righteous, infinitely kind, and graciously interested in us. Therefore his arrangements concerning us, and his actions in relation to us, must be for our good. It is consoling and even inspiring to know that our times are in his hand.

IV. THE REMOVAL BY GOD OF A BELOVED RELATIVE, WHO WAS NOT TO BE MOURNED BY THE BEREAVED SURVIVOR. "Yet neither shalt thou mourn or weep, neither shall thy tears run down." God does not prohibit to his servant the feeling of sorrow, but only its outward expression. All the visible signs of mourning in use amongst his countrymen he must abstain from (ver. 17). He may not weep, and even the relief of silent tears is forbidden him. It has been well said by Albert Smith that tears are "the safety-valves of the heart, when too much pressure is laid on." And Leigh

Hunt writes, "Tears enable sorrow to vent itself patiently. Tears hinder sorrow from becoming despair and madness." But in this painful bereavement Ezekiel must neither weep nor shed tears, in order that he may be a more impressive sign unto his fellow-exiles. Exceedingly severe were his trials. But for us in our sorrow there is no such prohibition. Christianity does not forbid tears. "Jesus wept." In the days of his flesh he "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death." And the solace of tears is allowed unto us. We may relieve the over-laden heart by sighs, and cool the burning brain by our flowing tears. And in the sorrows of bereavement we have richer, diviner consolations than these. We know that to those who are in Christ death is unspeakable gain; that the separations which it causes are more in appearance than in reality; and that in the great hereafter there will be blessed reunions with those who have passed beyond the veil.—W. J.

Vers. 20—23.—*An awful catastrophe and a prohibition of mourning.* "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Speak unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God," etc. The death of Ezekiel's wife, and his abstinence from mourning by reason thereof, were symbolical, and their signification is brought before us in our text. Two scenes are presented for our contemplation.

I. A PEOPLE DEPRIVED OF THEIR MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSIONS. 1. *The possessions of which they were to be deprived.* (1) The temple itself. "Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the desire of your eyes, and that which your soul pitieth." The last clause is literally, "the pity of your soul;" that which "your soul would spare—pledging life itself for it." See also in what exalted terms the temple is spoken of in ver. 25: "I take from them their strength," or stronghold, "the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their heart." The wife of Ezekiel, who was the desire of his eyes, symbolized the temple. In some respects the Jews made too much of their temple. They gloried in its outward beauty and splendour, even while they dishonoured God by their idolatries; they trusted in it as their stronghold, instead of making him their Refuge and Strength; they set their heart upon it, when they should have loved him with all their heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. And they were now about to lose that temple. Heathen intruders would first desecrate it and then destroy it (cf. Ps. lxxix. 1; lxxiv. 3—8). (2) The temple as a symbol. "The temple," says Schröder, "symbolizes all the possessions and power of Israel. To its existence in their midst they appealed against their brethren (ch. xi. 15); and to this they trusted amid all their wickedness and apostasy (ch. viii. 6; Jer. viii. 4)." And Hengstenberg remarks that in the profanation of the sanctuary "is included the dissolving of the whole covenant relation, the removal of everything sublime and glorious, that had flown from that covenant relation, of all that was valuable and dear to the people. The general conception is demanded by the fundamental passage, Lev. xxvi. 19, where by 'the pride of power' is meant all the glory of Israel. Then also by ver. 25, where in place of the sanctuary here all that is glorious appears." (3) Their sons and daughters. "Your sons and your daughters whom ye have left behind shall fall by the sword." Hitzig suggests that, "on the occasion of the expatriation, many parents may have been obliged to leave their children with relatives, from their being of too tender age to accompany them;" and these would be slain by the sword. But it seems to us better to interpret, with Hengstenberg, "The sons and the daughters are not those of individuals, but of the people as a whole. The house of Israel, not the exiles in particular, are addressed. In point of fact, it is as much as to say, 'your countrymen.'" They were soon to be stripped of their temple and its ordinances, their independence and liberty, their homes and country, and many of their fellow-countrymen would perish by famine, pestilence, and sword. 2. *The Person by whom they were to be thus deprived.* "Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will profane my sanctuary," etc. (ver. 21); "I take from them their strength," etc. (ver. 25). In this destruction and slaughter the Chaldeans were as instruments and weapons in the hand of God, who was himself the great Agent. 3. *The reason why they were to be thus deprived.* All this loss and misery was coming upon them because of their sins. They had forsaken God, and he was about to leave them without his defence. They had profaned his temple by their idolatries, and he

was about to allow the idolatrous Chaldeans to enter into it and destroy it. Their calamities were caused by their crimes. Their sufferings were the righteous retribution of their sins.

II. A PEOPLE THAT SHOULD NOT MOURN THE LOSS OF EVEN THEIR MOST PRECIOUS POSSESSIONS. "And ye shall do as I have done: ye shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of men. And your tires shall be upon your heads," etc. The outward demonstrations of mourning are thus forbidden to the Jews in their distress. The covering of the face from the upper lip downwards was a sign of mourning (cf. Lev. xiii. 45; Micah iii. 7). In great grief the mourners partook of food which their neighbours prepared and sent to them (cf. Jer. xvi. 7, Revised Version). This is here called "the bread of men." In many cases of mourning the head-dress was taken off, and dust or ashes sprinkled upon the head (cf. Lev. x. 6; Job ii. 12; Isa. lxi. 3; Lam. ii. 10). But David and his companions in a season of deep distress went weeping with their heads covered (2 Sam. xv. 30). It was also customary for mourners to go barefoot, as David did on the occasion just referred to. All these visible symbols of grief were to be absent from the house of Israel during the great distresses that were coming upon them. Yet our text speaks of their great sorrow. "Ye shall pine away in your iniquities, and moan one toward another." We suggest, by way of explanation: 1. *Their calamities would so overwhelm them as to leave them no power to think of the ceremonial of mourning.* Their losses and miseries would stun them with amazement and anguish of soul. "As in the prophet's case," says Schröder, "the misfortune of his wife's death disappears in the deep shadows of the overthrow of Jerusalem and Judah, so all the personal feelings of the exiles" (and we must not limit this to them to the exclusion of their fellow-countrymen) "shall be absorbed in this destruction of the last remnant of the kingdom and city. One and another shall be benumbed with pain, so that no comfort shall come from any quarter; on the contrary, a desolating feeling of guilt shall be general—such shall be their knowledge of the Lord." 2. *Their consciousness of the sin which caused their calamities should check the outward exhibitions of sorrow because of them.* This is well set forth by Fairbairn: "In the typical part of the delineation, it was not because the prophet was insensible to the loss he sustained by the death of his wife that he was to abstain from the habiliments and usages of mourning; but because there was another source of grief behind, of which this was but the sign and presage, and in itself so much greater and more appalling, that his spirit, instead of venting itself in expressions of sorrow at the immediate and ostensible calamity, was rather to brood in silent agony and concern over the more distressing evil it foreshadowed. And in like manner with the people, when all their fond hopes and visions were finally exploded, when the destruction of their beautiful temple, and the slaughter of their sons and daughters, came home to them as dreadful realities, they could only refrain from bewailing the loss of what had so deep a hold on their desires and affections, by having come to discern in this the sign of what was still greatly more dreadful and appalling. And what might that be but the blood-stained guilt of their iniquities, which had brought on the catastrophe? . . . The overwhelming sense should then break in upon them of the iniquities to which they had clung with such fatal perverseness, absorbing their spirits, and turning their moanings into a new and higher direction. The agonies of bereavement would be in a manner lost under the self-inflicted pains of contrition and remorse (cf. ch. vii. 16). Yet the description must be understood with certain qualifications, and indeed is to be viewed as the somewhat ideal delineation of a state of things that *should* be found, rather than the exact and literal description of what was actually to take place. . . . The people should, on the occurrence of such a fearful catastrophe, have sunk under an overpowering sense of their guilt and folly, and, like the prophet, turned the tide of their grief and mourning rather against the gigantic evil that lay behind, seen only in the chambers of imagery, than what outwardly appeared; they should have bewailed the enormous sins that had provoked the righteous displeasure of God, rather than the present troubles in which that displeasure had taken effect. And such, undoubtedly, was the case with the better and more enlightened portion of the people; but many still cleaved to their idols, and would not receive the instruction given them, either by the prophet's parabolical example or by the reality of God's afflicting dispensations."

CONCLUSION. Mark well the dread consequences of persistence in sin.—W. J.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXV.

The section on which we now enter—the great "parenthesis," as I have called it, of Ezekiel's prophetic work—contains messages to the seven nations that were most closely connected with the fortunes of Israel and Judah. These were (1) Ammon (ch. xxv. 1—7); (2) Moab (ch. xxv. 8—11); (3) Edom (ch. xxv. 12—14); (4) Philistia (ch. xxv. 15—17); (5) Tyre (ch. xxvi. 1—xxviii. 19); (6) Zidon (ch. xxviii. 20—24); (7) Egypt (ch. xxix. 1—xxxii. 32). A prophet's work was hardly complete without such a survey of the Divine order of the world so far as it came within the horizon of his thoughts; and Ezekiel had before him the example of like groups of prophecies addressed to the heathen nations with which Israel was brought into contact, in Isa. xiii.—xxiii. and Jer. xlvi.—li. It was natural that the two contemporary prophets should be led to address their messages to the same nations, and so we find Ezekiel's seven named together with others in Jer. xxv. 15—26, and five of them (Egypt and Philistia being excepted) in Jer. xxvii. 1—4; while we have fuller and special prophecies for Egypt (Jer. xlvi.); Philistia (Jer. xlvii.); Moab (Jer. xlviii.); Ammon (Jer. xlix. 1—6); Edom (Jer. xlix. 7—22), with the addition of Damascus (Jer. xlix. 23—27); Kedar (Jer. xlix. 28—33); Elam (Jer. xlix. 34—39); Babylon (Jer. l. 1). What is remarkable in Ezekiel is that he has no message for Babylon, which for Isaiah and Jeremiah was the leading representative of the world-powers considered in their antagonism to the Divine kingdom. This may, in part, be explained by supposing that he omitted it in order to keep to his number of *seven* nations as the symbol of completeness; but a more probable hypothesis is that he was led, as Jeremiah had at one time been (Jer. xxix. 1—7), to see in the Chaldean monarchy the appointed minister of the Divine judgments on Jerusalem and on the other nations. For his immediate purpose it was fitter that the exiles for whom he wrote should "seek the peace" of the people among whom they dwelt rather than that they should exult in its future downfall. He, like Jeremiah, may have been personally favoured by Nebuchadnezzar and his officials; and Daniel, whom he mentions with honour (ch. xiv. 14), and whom he may have known personally, was the king's chief minister. There was, we may well believe, a sufficient reason for this exceptional reticence.

Ver. 2.—**Set thy face against the Ammonites.** The main facts that are essential to a right understanding of the message to this people, not to speak of their long-standing enmity against Israel for many centuries, are (1) that they formed part of Nebuchadnezzar's army, as allies or tributaries, against Jehoiakim (2 Kings xxiv. 2); (2) that afterwards they, with other neighbouring nations, intrigued with Zedekiah against the Chaldean king (Jer. xxvii. 3), so that it was an open question whether his first act of vengeance should fall on Rabbath-Ammon or Jerusalem (ch. xxi. 20). In ch. xxi. 28—32, written not long before, Ezekiel had uttered his prediction of the coming judgment. Here we read that when they saw that Jerusalem had been laid waste, they, like Edom (Ps. cxxxvii. 7), exulted in her downfall. Earlier traces of cruelty and outrage are found in Ps. lxxxiii. 7; Amos i. 13—15; Zeph. ii. 8—11. We learn from Jer. xl. 14 that the name of the Ammonite king at this time was Baalis.

Vers. 4, 5.—**The men of the east**; Hebrew, *children of the east.* The name is applied in Gen. xxix. 1; 1 Kings iv. 30; Job i. 3; Judg. vi. 3, 33; vii. 12; viii. 10, to the nomadic tribes, Midianites and others, which roamed to and fro in the wilderness east of Ammon and Moab, after the manner of the modern Bedouins, with their sheep and camels, and were looked upon as descendants of Ishmael. **Palaces**; better, with the Revised Version, *encampments*, or *tent-villages.* The word is found, in this sense, in Gen. xxv. 16; Ps. lxix. 25; Numb. xxxi. 10. This was, probably, the immediate result of Nebuchadnezzar's march. Rabbah was left undefended, and became **a stable for the camels** of the Midianites and other tribes (Judg. vi. 5). The prediction has been slowly fulfilled. Under the Græco-Egyptian rule the city revived, was named after Ptolemy Philadelphus, and was flourishing under the Roman empire. Remains of temples, theatres, houses, are still found on its site, but its present desolate condition agrees with the picture drawn here by Ezekiel and in Jer. xlix. 2. The language of Jer. xlix. 6 implies captivity and a partial return from it.

Ver. 7.—**A spoil to the heathen.** The noun for "spoil" is not found elsewhere,

but probably means "food." The Hebrew Keri, i.e. its marginal reading, gives the same word as that rendered "spoil" in ch. xxvii. 5. The meaning is substantially the same whichever word we choose. Ezekiel, it will be noticed, says nothing about the return of the Ammonites, but contemplates, as in ch. xxi. 32, entire destruction. The meaning of *Rabbah* ("great" or "populous"), the mother-city of Ammon, gives greater force to the prophecy of desolation.

Ver. 8.—**Moab and Seir.** "Seir" stands elsewhere for Edom, but here appears as distinguished from it, the latter nation having a distinct message in ver. 12. A possible explanation is found in 2 Chron. xx. 23, where we find Moab and Ammon joined together against the inhabitants of Mount Seir. The Moabites may have retained possession of it, and so Ezekiel may have coupled the two names together. Their sin also, like that of Ammon, is that they exulted in the fall of Jerusalem. It was come down to the level of other cities, no longer exalted above them by the blessing of Jehovah. The Moabite Stone, found in the ruins of Dibon ('Records of the Past,' ix. 165), on which Mesha, King of Moab, narrates his conquests over neighbouring nations, including Israel, testifies to the strength of the kingdom, and in Isa. xv. and xvi. it is represented as conspicuous for its pride. They too, like the Ammonites, served in Nebuchadnezzar's army (2 Kings xxiv. 2).

Ver. 9.—**I will open the side of Moab;** literally, *the shoulder*, i.e. the slopes of the mountain of Moab (Josh. xv. 8, 10). For **Beth-jeshimoth** (equivalent to "House of wastes"), see Numb. xxxiii. 49; Josh. xii. 3; xiii. 20. It had been assigned to Reuben, but had been seized by the Moabites. It has been identified by De Sauley with the ruins now known as *Suaime*, on the north-eastern border of the Dead Sea. **Baal-meon** (Numb. xxxii. 38), more fully Beth-baal-meon (Josh. xiii. 17), or Beth-meon (Jer. xlviii. 23). The name is found in ruins of some extent, known as the fortress of *Mi'un* or *Maein*, about three miles south of Heshbon ('Dict. Bible,' *s.v.*). **Kiriathaim.** The dual form of the name (equivalent to "Two cities") implies, perhaps, the union of an old and new town, or two towns on the opposite sides of a brook or wady. The name appears in Gen. xiv. 5; Numb. xxxii. 37; Josh. xiii. 19; Jer. xlviii. 1, 23. It has been identified with *El-Teym*, about two miles from Medeba (Burckhardt), and with *Kureiyat*, on the south side of *Jebel Attarus*. Eusebius ('Onom.,' *s.v.*) describes it as about ten miles from Medeba, and close to the Baris, but nothing is known as to the last-named place. The three cities all belonged to the region which Sihon and Og had conquered from the Moabites before Israel obtained possession of them, and they were afterwards claimed as belonging to the Israelites by right of conquest (Judg. xi. 23), and there may therefore be a touch of irony in Ezekiel's language describing them as Moabite cities. Collectively they were **the glory of the country**, the region known as *the Belka*, in which they were situated, giving the best pasturage, then as now, in Southern Syria. Hävernick quotes a Bedouin proverb, "There is no land like Belka" (see Tristram's 'Land of Moab,' pp. 275, 303—305, 350). Kirjath and Baal-meon appear in Mesha's inscription on the Moabite Stone.

Ver. 10.—**Unto the men of the east with the Ammonites.** The Authorized Version is obscure. What is meant is that the Moabites as well as the Ammonites were to be given to the nomadic tribes, the "children of the east," for a possession. The doom that Ammon was to be no more remembered (ch. xxi. 32) was to be carried out to the uttermost, and the children of the east were to complete what Nebuchadnezzar had begun. The utter destruction of Ammon was, as it were, uppermost in the prophet's thoughts, and that of Moab was but secondary. Historically, the words received a partial fulfilment in Nebuchadnezzar's conquests five years after the destruction of Jerusalem (Josephus, 'Ant.,' x. 9. 7, and M. von Niebuhr's 'Gesch. Assurs,' p. 215), but the Ammonites were still an important people in the time of the Maccabees (1 Macc. v. 6, 30—45) and Justin Martyr ('Dial. cum Trypho, p. 272).

Vers. 12, 13.—**Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah,** etc. The statement receives many illustrations, notably in Ps. cxxxvii. 7, and at an earlier date in Amos i. 11; Obad. 11. What had been malicious exultation (the ἐπιχαιρεκακία, which Aristotle describes as the extremest type of evil) passed in the case of Edom into overt acts of hostility. The moment of Judah's weakness was seized on as an opportunity for gratifying what Ezekiel elsewhere (ch. xxxv. 5) calls the "perpetual hatred" of the people against Israel, for taking vengeance for the primal wrong which Esau had suffered at the hand of Jacob (Gen. xxvii. 36). (For other prophecies against Edom, see Numb. xxiv. 18, 19; Isa. xi. 14; Jer. xlix. 7—12; Joel iii. 19.) **Teman.** The name, which signifies "South," was probably applied to a district—twice, here and in Jer. xlix. 7, 8, coupled with Dedan. In Jer. xlix. 20, 21 the cry of the inhabitants of Teman is said to have been "heard in the Red Sea," and this determines its geographical position, as being, in accordance with its name, the southern region of Edom. In Job ii. 11 we have Eliphaz the Temanite as one of the patriarch's friends, and the same

name appears as that of a son of Esau (Gen. xxxvi. 11). In Jeremiah (*loc. cit.*) Teman is named as famous for its wisdom. Dedan is named as a grandson of Cush in Gen. x. 7, and of Abraham by Keturah in Gen. xxv. 3. It has been inferred from this that there were two branches of the nation, one on the shores of the Persian Gulf, nomadic and trading, as in the "travelling companies" of Dedanim (Isa. xxi. 13; ch. xxvii. 15, 20); the other settled in the territory of the Edomites ('Dict. Bible'). The latter is that to which Ezekiel refers. A various punctuation gives, with a better sense, "From Teman even unto Dedan they shall fall by the sword."

Ver. 14.—**By the hand of my people Israel.** The words received a fulfilment in the conquest of Edom by John Hyrcanus, who compelled its people to receive circumcision (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xiii. 9. 1). In Amos ix. 12 its subjugation is connected with the Messianic prophecy that the fallen tabernacle of David should be raised up. There is an obvious emphasis in the repetition of the word **vengeance.** The law of a Divine retribution will work out its appointed purpose—vengeance to those who sought vengeance. They (the Edomites) shall reap as they have sown, and shall know that the vengeance of Jehovah is more terrible than their own.

Ver. 15.—The sin of the Philistines is virtually the same as that of the Edomites. They also had a perpetual hatred. Century after century they had been, with various fortunes, the enemies of Israel—defeated (to confine ourselves to more recent history) by Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xvii. 11) and Uzziah (2 Chron. xxvi. 6), formidable under Jehoram (2 Chron. xxi. 16) and Ahaz (2 Chron. xxviii. 18), repressed by Hezekiah (Isa. xiv. 31), combining with Amalek, and Ammon, and Tyre, and Assyria against Jerusalem (Ps. lxxxiii. 7).

Ver. 16.—**The Cherethims.** The name appears, coupled with the Philistines, in Zeph. ii. 5, and has been supposed to be connected with Crete as the region from which they came, or in which they afterwards settled. By many writers both names are identified with the Cherethites and Pelethites, who appear as David's body-guard in 2 Sam. viii. 18; xv. 18, *et al.*, and who are supposed to represent a body of mercenary or subject troops formed out of the two nations. Both Ezekiel and Zephaniah connect the Cherethims with a paronomasia, the verb **I will cut off** being almost identical in sound with it. (For other prophecies, see Isa. xi. 14; xiv. 29—31; Jer. xlvii.; Joel iii. 4; Amos i. 6—8; Zeph. ii. 4—7; Zech. ix. 4—7.)

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The judgment of the nations.* This verse introduces a new series of prophecies, which contain successive utterances of judgment against foreign nations, extending over the following chapters to the end of the thirty-second. The whole series is deserving of consideration, both for the sake of its common character and in order to note the distinctions of the several parts.

I. GOD RULES OVER THE WHOLE EARTH. The prophet has not ended his mission when he has delivered his message to the Jews. He has a new oracle to utter. The word of God comes to him again with fresh, full, distinct declarations, and the whole of these declarations concern foreign nations. Seven nations are specified. The number is suggestive; the typical number of completeness, it implies that the nations named are not the only ones over whom God exercises jurisdiction, but that those nations, being the nearest to Israel, are selected as prominent specimens. The Hebrew prophets repeatedly extended their gaze far beyond the hills of Palestine. The Moabites might regard Jehovah as the tribal God of Israel, in the same sense in which Chemosh was their God (see the Moabite Stone), and Jephthah might use language which appeared to recognize this position (Judg. xi. 24), but the inspired prophets made no such mistake. They knew that the one God was Lord over the whole earth. God is now concerned with the heathen. He is also concerned with the godless at home. Men may ignore, renounce, or oppose him, but they cannot elude his notice or escape from his authority.

II. GOD EXERCISES HIS JUDGMENTS AGAINST WICKEDNESS OVER THE WHOLE EARTH. Those seven nations were called to account by God, charged with wickedness, and threatened with destruction. They were heathen nations, but that fact did not exonerate them from blame or protect them against just punishment. Christ announced a judgment of all the nations to follow that of Israel (Matt. xxv. 32). St. Paul spoke to the Athenians of God's judgment of all men (Acts xvii. 30, 31), and pointed out

to the Romans that the heathen would be subject to it (Rom. i. 18). These and other expressions show us that those people who had not light and law would not be judged by the high standard of the more instructed, but that their own consciences would be the measure of their guilt. The heathen know sin. Unbelievers cannot deny their own misconduct in daily life, though they may deny the doctrines of Scripture. As sinners, just like other men, if not as unbelievers, will they be judged. We cannot escape the consequences of our sins by repudiating religion.

III. GOD VISITS NATIONAL SINS WITH NATIONAL JUDGMENTS. 1. *Each nation is judged as a whole.* There is and there will be separate, individual judgments. Of this Christ spoke (Matt. xxv. 32). But while the New Testament is individualistic, the Old Testament is national. It more frequently takes a nation as a corporate unit. There are national sins, (1) sins which are committed by many in the nation, and so become characteristic of it, as drunkenness among Teutonic nations; and (2) sins committed by the people as a whole through its government. For such sins the nation is punished. England will be punished as a nation for England's sins. 2. *Each nation is judged separately.* A distinct judgment is pronounced against each of the seven nations. God is discriminating in his judgment of communities as well as in his judgment of individuals. All have not sinned in the same way, therefore all will not be punished on the same scale. The Judge of all the earth will do right.

In conclusion, note that God, who rules over all the nations, and will judge them all, has sent his Son to be the Saviour of all. The gospel is as broad as the judgment (Rom. v. 20).

Vers. 2—7.—*The scoffing nation.* The first nation selected for denunciation is the Ammonite, situated on the east of the Jordan and to the north of Moab, with its further border towards the Syrian desert. Its scoffing at the sacred things of the Jews, and its cruel mockery of their calamities, are to be followed by a dreadful destruction. Scoffing and mockery are dangerous practices for those who indulge in them.

I. THE CRUEL SCOFFING. 1. *An insult to religion.* "Thou saidst, Aha! against my sanctuary when it was profaned" (ver. 3). No doubt the sanctuary was regarded as a mystical centre of the power of the Jews. When the sacred edifice was overthrown, the talisman was destroyed, the spell was broken. This was a matter of delight to an enemy. Thus scoffing is itself a testimony to the power of religion, though that power may be apprehended in a very ignorant and superstitious way. But to rejoice in the downfall of religious influence is to proclaim one's self an enemy of God. It is fair, however, to see that scoffing at religion may be provoked by the misconduct of its champions. Much of the scoffing of unbelievers at Christianity is not inspired by hatred to the gospel, but by disgust at the unworthy conduct of Christians. The sins of the Jews led to dishonour to their temple. The sins of Christians invite insults against Christ. 2. *A love of destruction.* The Ammonites scoffed "against the land of Israel when it was desolate." The northern nation had been already destroyed and scattered, but the waste and ruined condition of the deserted land was a delight to the jealous neighbours on the eastern border. There is a fierce joy in the idea *delenda est Carthago.* But this is heathenish and wicked. Sin that works for death creates a delight in destruction. The Christian idea is the opposite to this—not breaking a bruised reed, but helping on the time when "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose" (Isa. xxxv. 1). 3. *A pleasure in cruelty.* The Ammonites scoffed at the contemporary calamity of the southern kingdom—"the house of Judah, when they went into captivity." The earlier destruction of Israel is a source of wild, fiendish joy. "Thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel" (ver. 6). There is no more Satanic wickedness than joy springing from the contemplation of the misery of others.

II. THE NATIONAL DOOM. This is to be very similar to that of Israel and Judah, so that what the Ammonites rejoiced to see in their neighbours shall come on their own heads, but still with certain variations determined by their situation and character. 1. *Subjection to others.* Ammon had rejoiced over the downfall of her western neighbours. She in turn shall be overrun by people from the east. The destruction was to come from Babylon, but "the men of the east," *i.e.* the Arabs, would follow it,

and like vultures pounce on the prey left by the advancing Chaldean army. Cruelty makes many enemies and no friends. The scoffer must expect to be scoffed at. 2. *Reduced civilization.* Rabbah, the proud capital, will become a pasture for camels, and the once populous land of Ammon a sheep run. National punishment lowers a people in the scale of social life. 3. *National destruction.* The Ammonites are to "perish out of the countries." This old-world nation did cease to exist. Though individuals may remain, the corporate life of the nation is destroyed. As the wages of individual sin is individual death, so a nation's sin is punished by national destruction. The wicked Roman empire was destroyed. It depends on our national conduct whether the same fate will come on the British empire.

Vers. 8—11.—*The sceptical nation.* The sister nation of Moab, lying just to the south of Ammon, comes second in the order of the peoples whose doom is pronounced by the prophet of Jehovah. It has its characteristic sin, and it will have its characteristic punishment.

I. THE RECKLESS SCEPTICISM. "Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen." This utterance expressed unbelief in regard to the peculiar privileges of Judah. The Jews had given themselves out as the chosen people of God, and their claim was disputed by Moab. 1. *The scepticism was prompted by jealousy.* Moab was vexed at the pretensions of the Jews. What right had one little nation to arrogate to itself the favour of Heaven? The same jealousy leads those who are outside the Christian profession to depreciate the privileges of the Church. But in the latter case there is far less excuse, because the doors of the Church are open for all to enter it. There is no exclusiveness in Christianity. Judaism was narrow, and while men of most heathen nations could only enter the covenant by becoming Jews, *i.e.* by renouncing their own nation, an express provision was made to rigorously exclude Moabites and Ammonites (Deut. xxiii. 3). 2. *The scepticism was encouraged by the sins of the Jews.* Unhappily there was a sting of truth in the taunt which the Moabites had flung at the degenerate Jews. As a fact, Judah had become only too like the heathen. Her separateness was based on a distinction of faith and morals; but alas! this distinction was fast melting away, and both in the practice of idolatry and in a departure from the high ethical standard of the Law, the Jews were assimilating themselves to their pagan neighbours. In the same way, the sins of Christians sow seeds of scepticism in the world. The Church is too much like the world, and the consequence is that the world doubts the high pretensions of the Church. 3. *This scepticism was grounded in error.* The view of the Moabites was superficial. They saw the glaring faults of the Jews, they observed the external likeness of Judah to heathen people, but they did not look beneath the surface to certain great spiritual truths. They did not see "the remnant" of the faithful, in which the prophets detected the germ of the future and recognized already the true Israel of God. They failed to note that a people may fall grievously from its mission, and yet may not utterly lose its vocation. It is the same with the world's judgment of the Church. In the darkest ages there has ever been a remnant of true Christians with whom could be found the sacred deposit of truth and grace. Even when the Church had sinned greatly, "the root of the matter" may still be in her, so that after heavy chastisement she may learn to repent and be restored. Moreover, the real Christian privileges which distinguish the true and faithful people of God from the world, the privileges of membership in the kingdom of heaven, fellowship with God, etc., are not perceived by the worldly, for they are "spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. ii. 14), and "eye hath not seen . . . the things which God hath prepared," etc. (1 Cor. ii. 9).

II. THE JUST PUNISHMENT. This is assimilated to the guilt. There is to be nothing distinctive in the punishment of Moab, only a repetition of that of Ammon. Denying the distinction of the Jews, the Moabites are not to be distinguished in their doom. Refusing to admit the unique national destiny of Israel, they themselves are to cease to be remembered among the nations. Now look at the just irony of history. In course of time, the sceptical nation melts out of memory, while the people of God grow into a greater distinction and fulfil a higher destiny than they ever anticipated.

Ver. 10.—*A forgotten people.* "That the Ammonites may not be remembered

among the nations." We have the name of this little nation preserved, but even that only reaches us through its connection with Israel; or if archæologists can point it out to us on ancient inscriptions, no history of value, nothing to identify the race, remains. It is, indeed, a forgotten people. Let us consider how a nation may bring upon itself this fate of oblivion.

I. IT MAY CEASE TO EXIST. Though the Jewish nation was broken up eighteen centuries ago, the Jewish people remain among us to this day as a numerous, marvellously energetic, and quite distinct section of mankind. But where are the Ammonites? We do not hear of Ammonite bankers, Ammonite newspaper editors, or the admission of the Ammonites to Parliament. Neither in Europe nor in their ancient Syrian plains and uplands are those long-lost people ever mentioned except as a race of antiquity. Now, how comes it that a people thus ceases to exist? A nation can only withstand the shock of invasion, conquest, and deportation to foreign parts without the loss of separate existence if its members are inspired and bound together by the possession of one common great idea. It is the Hebrew idea that retains the Jewish name and race as a separate entity independent of geographical boundaries and political revolutions. If the English are not to become an extinct people, they must depend on more than a strong navy and a well-equipped army; for no one can predict the chances of war. If we continue distinguished in our mission as a civilizing, Christianizing people, we can never cease to have our part in the great world's history. The Church will ultimately cease to exist if she eliminates all that is distinctive in Christian truth, and thinks to prosper simply on account of the strength of her organization and the wealth of her vested interests. But if she retains her sacred tradition of truth, she can outlive all revolutionary attacks on her worldly status.

II. IT MAY FAIL TO EXERT INFLUENCE. Each nation has its own peculiar privileges and vocation. However small a people may be, if it truly appreciates its privileges and honestly fulfils its vocation, it cannot well be forgotten. Achaia was a small state, yet as long as civilization endures it can never be forgotten. The Greeks contributed permanent elements to the world's civilization; and since Greek thought has passed into universal culture, it is impossible for Hellas to fall out of the memory of man, unless man degenerates to barbarism. The memory of Israel is greater than her present appearance and immediate influence. The Jews gave us the Bible, and with the Bible the eternal foundation of our faith. Therefore the Jews can never be forgotten. But what have the Ammonites given to the world? Contributing nothing, they deservedly sink into oblivion. If England is to live in history and in the world's continuous course, she must do her part and contribute her elements towards the progress of the race. The Church of the apostolic era was too fruitful ever to be forgotten. The Church of the nineteenth century will live or be forgotten according as it contributes to the spread of the kingdom of heaven and the help of man in his higher thought and life, or fails in this mission and sinks back into ignominious inactivity, frivolous formalism, and unspiritual self-complacency.

Vers. 12—14.—*The revengeful nation.* The Edomites are characterized as an especially revengeful people, because they watched for their opportunity, and, when the Jews were crushed and prostrate beneath the cruel Chaldean invasion, rushed in to smite their fallen foe.

I. THE WICKED REVENGE. 1. Vengeance is *presumptuous.* There is a right recompense for sin, but this lies with God. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. xii. 19). He who seizes the weapons of vengeance usurps the authority of God. 2. Vengeance is *cruel.* Divine vengeance is a just punishment. There is no vindictive pleasure in it. But human vengeance springs from an evil appetite, that seeks a personal satisfaction in the sufferings of its victim. Such vengeance is distinctly wicked. Indeed, the self-elected minister of vengeance is forced into this dilemma—either his vengeance is a delight to him, or it is not. If it is a delight, the joy is wicked, devilish; if it is no delight, why does he practise it, for the plea that he is urged by a sense of public duty is delusive? Directly that becomes the motive, revenge vanishes and punishment takes its place. 3. Vengeance is *unchristian.* It is to be noted that this vengeful spirit was charged as a great wickedness against the Edomites. They lived in the pre-Christian days, and they

were a heathen nation. Much more, then, is revenge sinful in a Christian. We have the clearer New Testament light; we have also the wonderful example of Christ to deter us from revenge. For us to behave as the Edomites is to merit their doom twice over. 4. Vengeance is *mean-spirited.* Apart from all the above-named considerations, when the question is approached on the lowest ground, vengeance bears a despicable aspect. The Edomites waited till the Chaldean power had overthrown Judah; then they rushed in to complete the destruction. This was behaving like the jackals, who cannot destroy big game, but who are mad to devour the carrion that the lion has left. Revenge knows no honourable laws of war. It has the degraded spirit of the assassin.

II. THE NATURAL PUNISHMENT. There is generally a resemblance between sin and its penalty. The punishment is just the fruit of the sin. Thus the vengeful conduct of the Edomites brings vengeance on the head of the vindictive people. 1. *Revenge does not end a quarrel.* This is the mistake of it. It is foolish and short-sighted, for, in return for its own brief, wild delight, it rouses fresh enmity and provokes retaliation. The too stern treatment of the French by the Germans left a rankling spirit of vengeance in the breasts of the defeated people. The *vendetta* in Corsica keeps up a feud for generations—each member on one side provoking one in return from the other side. Shylock speaks of the mutual vengeance of race-hatred, "If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Revenge." 2. *Revenge provokes the most bitter punishment.* This comes from the wronged victim. Judah takes vengeance on Edom. Possibly this happens indirectly through the Chaldean invasion predicted by Jewish prophets, or Jews may have some direct hand in the work. Vengeance makes enemies. This form of self-protection is a fatal failure. The true victory over one's enemies is by forgiveness, the heaping coals of fire on his head (Prov. xxv. 21, 22).

Vers. 15—17.—*The hating nation.* The Philistines are signalized by an ugly pre-eminence in hatred, and they are to be punished with an extremity of Divine vengeance.

I. THE PRE-EMINENT HATRED. Partly through her own mischief-making, but largely on account of unwarrantable jealousy, the favoured land of Israel had been troubled with the enmity of most of her neighbours. But no people had shown such bitter and long-cherished animosity as the little fishing and farming community on its south-western border. From the days of the judges, the Philistines appear as the hereditary enemies of Israel. Possibly the fact that they were hemmed in between the hill country of Judah and the sea, and so were cramped for room and had their access to the east and the west cut off from them, made them jealous of their more prosperous and expansive neighbours. Be that as it may, hatred characterizes the relations between the two peoples. Close contact does not produce friendship if sympathy or its worldly substitute, mutual interest, be lacking. The most bitter quarrels are those between near neighbours. Family feuds are proverbially rancorous. Means of communication will not bring "peace on earth" and "good will towards men." Commerce does not abolish war. Railways have not made friends of France and Germany. Hatred must be conquered by deeper means than worldly advantage.

II. THE DREADFUL DOOM. 1. *It is a Divine vengeance.* This must always be fearful; but there are degrees in the execution of it determined by varieties in the character and conduct of men. Here it is described as peculiarly heavy—"great vengeance," "with furious rebukes." There is nothing that God prizes so highly as unselfish love, the queen of all virtues; and accordingly there is nothing that he so deeply hates as hatred. This is a sin that most surely provokes the wrath of Heaven. 2. *It is seen in destruction.* The Philistines had been named "Cherethims"—"extirpated" from their old land when they came as exiles across the Levant and settled on its eastern shore. Now they will deserve that name a second time, for they must be extirpated outright. This thing has been accomplished. The Philistines have ceased to exist. A similar doom had been threatened against the other nations, but with Philistia it was most impressive, as coming most directly from the hand of God. 3. *It is experienced after long delay.* For generations the Philistines had been the incessant enemies of Judah, a perpetual thorn in her side, sometimes utilized for purposes

of needful castigation, often slumbering in impotent inactivity, but never truly reconciled to the Jews. Their punishment was long delayed, but it was not outlived. It is a fearful thing to suffer from accumulated punishment. Awful must be the doom of the aged sinner. Yet it is never too late to return. Even penitent Philistines will be pardoned.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—7.—*Malignity.* The prophet, having been enjoined to silence for a season with regard to Israel, turns to the several heathen nations by which his countrymen were encompassed. His mission to them must have been one very painful to discharge; for he was called upon to rebuke their sins and to denounce against them the anger of an omniscient and righteous Ruler. Between Ammon and Israel there was ancient feud. But the day of Ammon's judgment was now at hand.

I. THE NATURE OF MALIGNITY. The children of Ammon are charged with malevolence and malignity. They wished harm to their neighbours, the children of Israel; and, when evil came upon them, they rejoiced in their neighbours' calamities. When Judah's sanctuary was profaned, when the land was laid waste and desolate, when Judah's sons were carried captive, they said, "Aha!" they clapped their hands, they stamped with their feet, and rejoiced with all the despite of their soul. All these actions were manifestations of a vile disposition and habit of mind leading to satisfaction in the ills and adversity befalling others. The reality of such a vice as malignity cannot be questioned.

II. THE BASENESS OF MALIGNITY. There are sins into which men fall through the pressure of temptation arising from their natural constitution, and through the circumstances of life providentially permitted. We recognize in such sins signs of the frailty of human nature, and we make allowances for the strength of the temptation to which the sinner has yielded. But the sin of which the Ammonites were guilty was of a different kind. What were called by Lord Shaftesbury, the author of the 'Characteristics,' the "unsocial passions," are of all the most blamable and inexcusable. They are those habitual emotions known as malice, envy, jealousy, malignity. It is wrong to seek our own pleasures overmuch; but it is worse to seek and to delight in the suffering and the ruin of our fellow-creatures. Inasmuch as we are members of one race, of one body, and partakers of one nature, we are peculiarly bound to sympathy, benevolence, and mutual helpfulness. The Christian law is one of great beauty both in substance and in expression, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, weep with them that weep." The malignity displayed by the children of Ammon was not only neglect and violation of the natural law of sympathy, it was in exact opposition to that law. This is a sin not even now extinct; traces of its presence may be found even in Christian communities, though decency may compel those who are guilty of it to conceal it with a thin disguise. But it is a sin which every conscience must condemn, and in defence or even extenuation of which no word can be uttered.

III. THE EXPLANATION OF MALIGNITY. This habit of mind may have originated in a state of society in which every man's hand was against his neighbour, in which, consequently, suspicion and distrust were prevalent. In such a state of social life (if it may so be called) the strength of a neighbour was a source of danger and fear to a people conscious of their own weakness; and any calamity which diminished a formidable neighbour's power to harm would awaken satisfaction and rejoicing, as presaging peace and the opportunity of progress and prosperity. The emotion may survive the circumstances in which it arose. But this can be no excuse for the cherishing of malevolence and malignity in ordinary states of society, in which it is an unjustifiable expression of the worst tendencies of human nature.

IV. THE CONDEMNATION AND PUNISHMENT OF MALIGNITY. The sentence issued against Ammon is one of awful severity; the sin must have been inexcusable and even horrible to call for such a punishment as is here published. They were to be conquered and spoiled; strangers were to possess their land and enjoy its produce; and as a people they were to be blotted out from amongst the nations, and to be no more. The displeasure of the Eternal could not be more powerfully exhibited. And there

is every reason for believing that the same sin is ever regarded with the same disapproval and meets with a similar retribution. Malignity reached its deepest depths when the holy Jesus was hated by scribes, Pharisees, and religious leaders, who found in his goodness the reproach of their sin. Israel rejected Israel's noblest Son, nay, the Son of God himself. And in rejecting Christ the ancient people of God brought upon themselves the condemnation which has from that day to this remained upon the scattered and homeless sons of Abraham. How awful and how instructive are the lessons concerning God's hatred of sin embodied in the history of mankind!—T.

Vers. 8—11.—*The blasphemy and the punishment of Moab.* Although Ezekiel, speaking as the prophet of the Lord, has words of upbraiding and of threatening for the several nations from whose hostility Israel suffered, it is not the case that these words are words of indiscriminate application. On the contrary, they have special reference to the circumstances of the several peoples and to their peculiar relations with Israel. In the case of Moab, the prophet urges a peculiar charge, which is not, indeed, supported by detailed facts, but which he was nevertheless assured was a just charge and a heinous offence.

I. THE PECULIAR OFFENCE. Moab was convicted of saying, "The house of Judah is like unto all the nations." The prophet knew, and we know, that the descendants of Jacob were a separated, chosen, and peculiar people. And to assert the contrary, as Moab had done, was to cast a slur upon the revelation of God, upon the vocation with which his people were called, upon the purpose which Divine wisdom had in view in conferring upon them special privileges.

II. THE MORAL ENORMITY OF THE OFFENCE. It is only when the character of this sin of Moab is carefully considered, with all that it involves, that the guilt of Moab appears in its proper blackness. 1. It involves the classing of the holy and ever-blessed Jehovah with the idols which were the expression of human injustice, cruelty, caprice, and lust. 2. It involves the confusion of the righteous laws of Moses with the regulations and observances which obtained in heathen communities, some just and some unjust, and many of them superstitious and impure. 3. It involves the confusion of the Divine ordinances of sacrifice, of priesthood, of religious service, of sacred festivals, with the debasing rites practised among the unenlightened idolaters. 4. It involves the classing together of the people consecrated to Jehovah with those who had abandoned themselves to systems of selfishness, worldliness, or superstition. All this was just calling darkness light, and light darkness. It, indeed, reminds us of what our Lord has said regarding blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. We cannot, therefore, look upon this offence of the Moabites as something which has no application to ourselves. The offence of calling evil good and good evil is an offence which, in various forms, is committed in our own day, and against which, therefore, men need still to be warned. There are blemishes in the Church of Christ as it actually exists upon earth; but still it is the Church of Christ, and it must not, therefore, be confounded with institutions of human origin, and to speak of it as we might speak of other organizations and institutions is to sin somewhat after the manner of the sin of Moab in the days of the Captivity.

III. THE PUNISHMENT OF THE OFFENCE. In the case of Moab this was terrible indeed. The territory was to be laid open to the incursions of the Eastern foe, the cities were to be taken by a foreign force, judgments were to be executed upon the people, and, like the Ammonites, they were to be overtaken by speedy and irremediable ruin. The very thought of such infliction is enough to make the sinner tremble, to induce him to repent of his evil words and actions, and to seek, in God's own way, reconciliation with the authority which he has despised. Silence, contrition, and true submission of heart are the true way of peace.—T.

Vers. 12—14.—*The hostility and the curse of Edom.* Often in the course of Old Testament history do we meet with references to the inhabitants of Edom, and usually they are exhibited as taking an attitude of hostility towards the chosen people. It is certainly remarkable that Ezekiel, in his Eastern captivity, should concern himself with these border states. But it is evident that he was at the time very deeply impressed with the great principle of national responsibility and national retribution;

and that it was revealed to him that this principle had application, not to the Jews alone, but to all the nations of the earth. The Edomites, upon the eastern frontiers of the southern tribes, were often a source of annoyance to the inhabitants of Judah and their neighbours. They were regarded as the foes, not of Israel only, but of Israel's God. And against them the prophet utters words of reproach and of threatening.

I. THE MANIFESTATION OF EDOM'S HOSTILITY AGAINST JUDAH. The attitude of opposition which Edom assumed had an especial character; it was designated "vengeance," "revenge." This implies a standing feud, and the bitterness which is bred of repeated acts of enmity and injustice.

II. THE GROUND AND CAUSE OF THIS HOSTILITY. We are not expressly informed upon this point; but we shall not err in assigning this enmity to the repugnance entertained by the Edomites to the religion of Judah, and to the worship and prescribed rites and observances which were so much in conflict with the idolatrous religion professed and practised by the children of Edom.

III. THE GUILT OF THIS HOSTILITY. This is apparent both from the nature of the case itself, and from the retribution which Divine justice deemed necessary in its chastisement.

IV. THE PECULIAR FORM OF PUNISHMENT WITH WHICH EDOM WAS VISITED. This is perhaps the most striking figure in the passage. Retribution was to be wrought upon Edom "by the hand of my people, Israel." The sufferers were the instruments of punishment. The power of Judah may have seemed scarcely adequate to the task. But it was appointed by the King of nations that the Edomites should pay the penalty of sin; and, not only so, but that those whom they had hated and reviled should be the scourge by which the smiters should be smitten. The hand of God's people Israel was God's own hand, and, when the Edomites felt it, they knew by bitter experience the righteous vengeance of the Lord.—T.

Vers. 15—17.—*The old hatred.* Between the Israelites, the children of light, and the Philistines, the children of darkness, there existed for centuries almost uninterrupted hostility. Their position upon the coast, their powerful cities, their formidable warriors, their imposing yet debasing religion, concurred to make them mighty. And the immediate neighbourhood of the descendants of Abraham brought the two peoples into frequent collision. The Philistines were sometimes used as the means of humiliating the unfaithful and disobedient children of Israel; and bitterly was the discipline felt when the Philistines rejoiced over them. For the Philistines on the west, as well as for the Ammonites and Edomites upon the east, the day of reckoning was at hand.

I. THE HATRED OF THE PHILISTINES TOWARDS ISRAEL WAS ANCIENT, PERENNIAL, AND UNDECAYING. This may be illustrated from the historical books of the Old Testament Scriptures.

II. THIS HATRED HAD ITS POLITICAL ORIGIN IN THE SETTLEMENT OF THE ISRAELITES IN CANAAN.

III. AND ITS RELIGIOUS ORIGIN IN THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE PURE WORSHIP OF JEHOVAH AND THE DEGRADING RELIGION PRACTISED IN PHILISTIA.

IV. THIS HATRED DISPLAYED ITSELF OFFENSIVELY IN THE TIME OF ISRAEL'S DEPRESSION AND HUMILIATION.

V. THIS HATRED BROUGHT DOWN UPON THE PHILISTINES THE INDIGNATION AND THE RETRIBUTIVE RECOMPENSE OF THE MOST HIGH.

VI. THIS HATRED THUS FURNISHED AN OCCASION FOR THE VINDICATION BY GOD OF HIS OWN RIGHTEOUS GOVERNMENT AND IRRESISTIBLE AUTHORITY.

APPLICATION. 1. There is such a thing as national morality. Apart from the character and conduct of individuals, a nation by its collective action proves itself to possess a certain moral unity. 2. There is such a thing as national responsibility. The people sin, and the people suffer; the people repent and call upon God, and the people are saved. 3. There is especial scope for the display of national virtues, and for the right use of national opportunity and probation, in the relations which subsist between different and sometimes rival communities. 4. National pride, power, and prosperity are of no avail in God's sight, if injustice and malevolence are exhibited by nations in their intercourse and transactions with each other. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness."—T.

VERS. 1—17.—*The tribunal of nations.* The Hebrews in captivity might, with probability, suppose that, since God had employed other armies to chastise Israel, such nations were without sin, or else their sins had been condoned by God. Nothing of the sort. God is no Respecter of nations. Righteousness everywhere is acceptable to him. Unrighteousness anywhere is offensive. And touching the degrees of iniquity, he claims to be Supreme Judge and the wise Punisher. Because he employs men in his service, he does not allow *this* to be a criterion of their acceptance. Internal character, not external service, is the only passport to heaven. "The just shall live."

I. THE SUPREME AUTHORITY AMONG NATIONS. Never yet have the nations of the world combined to elect a common tribunal, before which international disputes may be heard. We may hope for such in the future. Yet a Supreme Authority there is—a King of nations! Undoubtedly, the God of heaven takes note of every national delinquency, deals with every nation in a method consonant with its present development, and visits it with reward or punishment according to its desert. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." And not individual persons only, but societies and empires, are weighed every day in the balance of Divine justice. A fierce light, not only from human eyes, but from the Divine eye, bends upon every throne.

II. THE INDICTMENT. The indictment brought against the neighbours of Israel was twofold. 1. *Rancorous hatred.* The people of Ammon and others were chiefly incensed against Israel because of their peculiar religion. For a long period, Israel had maintained a great distinction, in that they scorned idol-deities. By virtue of their allegiance to the true God they had gained their triumphs over the degenerate Canaanites. Hence this dislike of Israel was, at its root, a dislike of Jehovah; and dislike of Jehovah meant dislike of righteousness. 2. *Spiteful revenge.* The nations whom God employed to humble Israel had gone beyond their commission. They had fostered the lowest animal passions, and had given way to fiercest revenge. So far as a nation wages war in defence of its rights, it may be approved. Yet if, in the prosecution of its task, it inflicts needless suffering, or rejoices in mere destruction, that nation, in its turn, has violated the rights of humanity, and will be punished. Even if God has given to a nation the clearest command to invade and to conquer, that command is circled round with the requirements of righteousness. Personal feeling must be repressed. Public advantage alone must be promoted. Otherwise that nation so employed becomes a criminal.

III. THE SENTENCE. 1. It is *equitable.* Edom had dealt vengeance "against the house of Judah." Therefore the sentence is, "I will lay *my* vengeance upon Edom." The Philistines had "taken vengeance with a despiteful heart." Therefore, said God, "I will execute great vengeance upon them." Retribution is complete. The same word that describes the sin describes also the penalty. Every sin contains in its womb the embryo of chastisement. 2. *The sentence includes desolating war.* "They that take the sword, perish by the sword." The successful warrior teaches his enemies how to handle spear and shield. His personal strength does not abide for ever, nor yet his personal influence. His watchful, sleepless foes wait in secret for their opportunity of revenge. Violence naturally begets violence. In return for reckless destruction on others, their lands were to be desolated—productiveness to cease, cities to be razed, and their palaces to be occupied by the foe! 3. *Annihilation of empire and name.* The justice of God is far more sweeping than anything that we can conceive. "The Ammonites shall not be remembered among the nations." "I will cause thee to perish out of the countries." Men find a pleasure in posthumous fame. They love the anticipation of living again in their children and in their children's children. To know in their lifetime that this prospect is cut off is a serious loss of enjoyment. One great source of pleasure is destroyed. One great inspiration to effort is extinguished.

IV. A GRACIOUS RESPITE. The simple fact that Jehovah's prophet fore-announced these things was an act of kindness. It gave the people an occasion and an urgent reason for repentance. This is not after the manner of men. In human jurisprudence there is no place for repentance. But God's agencies are every way superior to man's. As it was with Nineveh in Jonah's day, so might it have been with Moab and Edom and Philistia. God's patience and pity are wonderful. Yet, at length, justice strikes the avenging blow.

V. THE FINAL AIM. "They shall know that I am the Lord." This conviction of God's existence and God's active righteousness will surely come at length, but in many cases will not come in time to avert the great catastrophe. Every such national overthrow will be a monument to God's power and God's veracity. "Being dead, these nations yet speak." The mounds ransacked to-day for treasures produce eloquent demonstrations of the truthfulness of ancient prophecy and of the certainty of Divine retribution. There is a knowledge that saves; there is a knowledge that does not save.—D.

Vers. 1—7.—*The sin and judgment of the Ammonites.* "The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against the Ammonites," etc. For a time the mouth of Ezekiel was closed in relation to his own countrymen; he was to be to them as a dumb man, or at least dumb as a prophet (ch. xxiv. 27). But having already proclaimed the judgment of God upon Israel and Judah by various figures and with much reiteration, he proceeds to declare that judgment against the neighbouring heathen nations. "Judgment indeed begins at the house of God; but if the Father of the household does not spare the sons, how soon must it alight upon the others! This doctrine first of all shines forth from the connection of this chapter with the preceding chapters. Then, also, we see here how, with all the special solicitude wherewith God interested himself in Israel, he still by no means lets the heathen out of his sight, since he must show himself to be a God also for the heathen." Of these nations the prophet first addresses himself to the Ammonites. They were related to the Israelites, being the descendants of Ben-ammi, the son of Lot by his younger daughter. Yet they were inveterate enemies to Israel. "They had joined Eglon, had oppressed Israel in the time of Jephthah, had fought against Saul, David, Jehoshaphat, and Jotham. They had joined the Moabites in Nebuchadnezzar's army, when he besieged Jerusalem in the reign of Jehoiakim (2 Kings xxiv. 2)." And they exulted in the miseries of Israel and Judah. The date of this prophecy is uncertain. Hengstenberg says that "the date in ch. xxiv. 1 applies to this also. What was predicted in ch. xxiv. regarding the immediate future of Judah is here presupposed as already accomplished; so that the point of view is ideal." But the 'Speaker's Commentary' supposes "that this prophecy was delivered immediately after the capture of the city by Nebuchadnezzar." We have in the text—

I. AN EXHIBITION OF THE SIN OF THE AMMONITES. 1. *Exultation in the miseries of others.* "Thou saidst, Aha! against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was made desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity." "They were," says Greenhill, "the neighbours bordering upon them; they were their confederates, in league with the King of Egypt, as the Jews were; they were their half-brethren, descending from Lot; and upon these accounts should have sympathized with the Jews, wept with those that wept (Rom. xii. 15), been sensible of their great adversities (Heb. xiii. 3); but they insulted over them, mocked at them, were despiteful against them, and added coals to the fire, weight to their burdens, and more chains to their bonds" (cf. Lam. i. 2). They rejoiced when Shalmaneser King of Assyria invaded Israel, desolated the land, and carried the people into captivity (2 Kings xvii. 1—6). Again, they exulted in the miseries of the people of Judah when they were conquered and carried into exile in Babylon (2 Kings xxiv. 10—16; xxv. 1—11). They triumphed in the national ruin and sore calamities of the Jews (cf. ch. xxi. 28; Lam. ii. 15, 16; Zeph. ii. 8). Such derision and insultation are directly opposed to the will of God, especially when, as in this case, the mockers are themselves also guilty of the sin which brought down the distresses. When some suffer sore calamities, God's will is that others should be thereby stimulated to consider their ways and repent of their evil doings (cf. Luke xiii. 1—5). Moreover, in exulting over the fallen and mocking the miserable there is Satanic malevolence and shocking cruelty. Sometimes saintly men have severely suffered by reason of such mockery. David smarted under it (Ps. xxxv. 12—16). But the guilt of the Ammonites was darker even than this. They rejoiced in the desecration of the temple of God. "Thou saidst, Aha! against my sanctuary, when it was profaned." They looked upon that as the overthrow of the religion of the Jews, and probably declared that Jehovah was unable to defend either his temple or his

worshippers. Thus they were guilty of blasphemy against the Lord God. 2. *Exultation in the miseries of others with cruel animosity.* "Thou hast rejoiced with all the despite of thy soul against the land of Israel" (ver. 6). They rejoiced "with the soul, with passion, therefore with the whole heart's contempt of which" they were capable. They triumphed with revolting malignity. 3. *Exultation in the miseries of others with cruel animosity in unrestrained expression.* "Thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet," etc. (ver. 6). Their bitter rejoicing knew no bounds of moderation or even of common decency. Such was their grievous and inhuman sin.

II. A DECLARATION OF THE PUNISHMENT OF THE AMMONITES. 1. *Their land should be given to others.* "Therefore, behold, I will deliver thee to the children of the east for a possession, and they shall set their encampments in thee, and make their dwellings in thee; they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk." In the fifth year after the destruction of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar made war against the Ammonites, and brought them under subjection (Josephus, 'Ant.,' x. 9. 7). "After this the land was subjected to various masters." But at length it fell to the Arabians, who are spoken of by the prophet as "the children of the east." This was a common designation of the wandering tribes of the desert (cf. Judg. vi. 3). "They encamp now periodically in the land of Ammon. They have continued to do so for centuries. They, and they only, eat up the fruits of the land." Thus the children of Ammon, who had exulted in the expatriation of Israel and Judah, were despoiled of their own country. 2. *Their metropolis should become a desolation.* "And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the children of Ammon a couching-place for flocks." When this judgment was fulfilled we know not. But that it has been fulfilled is placed beyond dispute by the ruins of what was once a flourishing city. That city entered upon an era of marked prosperity under Egyptian rule. It was rebuilt or restored by Ptolemy Philadelphus, and was called Philadelphia, after his name. It existed for some centuries afterward with varying fortunes. "As far down as the fourth century (of the Christian era) it was esteemed one of the most remarkable and strongest cities of the whole of Cœle-Syria." And now amidst its ruins may be traced the remains of a magnificent theatre, an ancient castle, temples, mausoleum, and other buildings. The doom has been fulfilled, and Rabbah, "the populous" (as the name signifies), is now a desolation and without an inhabitant. Dr. Kitto brings forward several witnesses to the fulfilment of the word of the Lord by the prophet in ver. 5. "Dr. Keith, in the last edition of his 'Evidence from Prophecy,' states that Lord Claud Hamilton told him that 'while he was traversing the ruins of the city the number of goats and sheep which were driven in among them was exceedingly annoying, however remarkable as fulfilling the prophecies.' Lord Lindsay found bones and skulls of camels mouldering in the area of the theatre, and in the vaulted galleries of this immense structure. He says, 'The valley stinks with dead camels, one of which was rolling in the stream; and although we saw none among the ruins, they were absolutely covered in every direction with their dung. That morning's ride would have convinced a sceptic. How says the prophecy? "I will make Rabbah a stable for camels."' He adds, 'We met sheep and goats by thousands, and camels by hundreds, coming down to drink, all in beautiful condition.' Mr. George Robinson also testifies, 'The space intervening between the river and the western hills is entirely covered with the remains of private buildings, now only used as stables for camels and sheep. There is not a single inhabitant remaining: thus realizing the prophecy respecting this devoted city.' These testimonials have occurred since attention has been called to the subject of the literal fulfilment of local prophecies. We add that of Mr. Buckingham, which is all the more valuable as being of anterior date. He halted for the night with a tribe of Arabs which he found encamped among the ruins, in a hollow behind the top of the theatre. Next morning he writes in his journal, 'During the night I was almost entirely prevented from sleeping by the bleating of flocks, the neighing of mares, and the barking of dogs.'" Thus literally and minutely has the prediction of the prophet been accomplished. 3. *Their existence as a people would be terminated.* "Therefore, behold, I have stretched out my hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the nations; and I will cut thee off from the peoples, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord." These expressions indicate utter and total destruction. In this respect the judgment of the Ammonites was more severe than

that pronounced upon Israel. For the latter there was hope and a future; but for the former the prophetic message closes darkly, even as their history has closed. As a tribe the Ammonites "disappear wholly at last in the Arabians."

CONCLUSION. "Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker: and he that is glad at calamity shall not be unpunished" (Prov. xvii. 5). "He that maketh others' calamities the object of his gladness stirs up God to be the Author of his destruction" (Greenhill).—W. J.

Vers. 8—11.—*The sin and punishment of the Moabites.* "Thus saith the Lord God; Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen," etc. The Moabites were the descendants of Moab, the son of Lot by his elder daughter. They occupied the fertile district east of the Dead Sea, and south of the territory of the Ammonites. The condition of the Moabites may be gathered from Isa. xv., xvi., and Jer. xlviii. The latter prophecy was pronounced about "ten or twelve years before the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar by which Jerusalem was destroyed;" so that it may be taken as setting forth their condition in the time of our prophet. That condition is well stated by Sir George Grove, in Dr. Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible:' "The nation appears in them as high-spirited, wealthy, populous, and even to a certain extent civilized, enjoying a wide reputation and popularity. With a metaphor which well expresses at once the pastoral wealth of the country and its commanding, almost regal, position, but which cannot be conveyed in a translation, Moab is depicted as the strong sceptre, the beautiful staff, whose fracture will be bewailed by all about him, and by all who know him. In his cities we discern a 'great multitude' of people living in 'glory,' and in the enjoyment of great 'treasure,' crowding the public squares, the house-tops, and the ascents and descents of the numerous high places and sanctuaries where the 'priests and princes' of Chemosh or Baal-peor minister to the anxious devotees. Outside the towns lie the 'plentiful fields,' luxuriant as the renowned Carmel—the vineyards and gardens of 'summer fruits;' the harvest is being reaped, and the 'hay stored in its abundance,' the vineyards and the presses are crowded with peasants, gathering and treading the grapes, the land resounds with the clamour of the vintagers. These characteristics contrast very favourably with any traits recorded of Ammon, Edom, Midian, Amalek, the Philistines, or the Canaanite tribes. And since the descriptions we are considering are adopted by certainly two, and probably three, prophets—Jeremiah, Isaiah, and the older seer—extending over a period of nearly two hundred years, we may safely conclude that they are not merely temporary circumstances, but were the enduring characteristics of the people. In this case there can be no doubt that, amongst the pastoral people of Syria, Moab stood next to Israel in all matters of material wealth and civilization." Our text presents to our notice—

I. A SIN SEEMINGLY SLIGHT, BUT ESSENTIALLY HEINOUS. "Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen." In these words we have: 1. *A denial of the superiority of the Jews over their heathen neighbours.* In many respects they were their superiors. God had granted to them the clearest revelation of his character and will, his temple also, and the ordinances of his worship. His mighty hand had frequently been stretched out in glorious deeds on their behalf. He had assured them of many blessings and of a bright future. Jerusalem "was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces." But now that Nebuchadnezzar has quite vanquished them, taken their famous city, and destroyed their holy and beautiful temple, the Moabites say, "The house of Judah is like unto all the nations." By this they probably meant: (1) They are no better in their character. By their idolatries and idolatrous customs, and by their political treacheries, the Jews had given their enemies too much occasion to say this. Yet the religion which was prescribed to them was incomparably superior to those of their heathen neighbours; and there was at least a small remnant that was faithful to that religion. (2) They are no better in their condition. When the Chaldeans came against them, they were no more able to resist them than any heathen people would have been. And these things were said by the Moabites, not sorrowfully, but scornfully. Like the Ammonites, they rejoiced over the miseries of the people of Israel and Judah (Zeph. ii. 8). Hence the Prophet Jeremiah cries, "Moab shall be in derision. For was not Israel a derision unto thee? . . . for as often as thou speakest of him thou waggest the head" (Jer. xlviii.

26, 27). 2. *A denial of the superiority of the Lord Jehovah over heathen gods.* This aspect of the sin of the Moabites is clearly and forcibly presented by Hengstenberg: "The guilt consists in the denial of the true Deity of the God of Israel; for only on this ground could Israel be placed on the same level with all other nations. The pretence for this denial they take from the misery of Israel, which they derive, not from their guilt, but from the feebleness of their God, and discern therein a palpable proof against his true and full Deity. Their God Jehovah, the absolutely pure Being, the primeval Ground of all things, the absolutely certain Helper of his people, is a mere fancy: otherwise must they soar above, and not sink beneath. This full Deity, against whose historically extant evidence they rashly close their eyes, they must now discover by their own destruction. The transgression is seemingly small; but it is that by which the nations perish even to the present day. As each takes its stand towards God, who is historically revealed in his Church, so is its destiny measured out." Thus "Moab magnified himself against the Lord" (Jer. xlviii. 26).

II. A PUNISHMENT CORRESPONDING TO THEIR SIN. 1. *The Moabites had rejoiced in the overthrow and exile of the Jews, and they also should be overthrown and their land possessed by others.* "Therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities, from his cities which are on his frontiers." He would expose Moab to the assaults of its enemy. Certain cities are mentioned, and are appropriately described as "on his frontiers." They lay to the north of the river Arnon, which was the proper boundary of Moab (Numb. xxi. 13). Again, these cities are called "the glory of the country." The tract in which they were situated, "belonging to the district called by the Arabians *Al Belka*, has been at all times highly valued on account of the excellence of its pastures for cattle. Among others, Bochart writes, 'As the pasturage in Belka is far better than in the rest of Southern Syria, there has been a continual struggle among the various Arab tribes as to who should secure it. The Bedouins are accustomed to say, "Thou canst find no land like Belka"' (Hävernich)" ('Speaker's Commentary'). Moreover, their country was ultimately to pass away from them into the possession of "the children of the east," the wandering Arab tribes. Like Ammon, the land was ravaged by hostile armies, and at last was left unoccupied except by the Bedouins. 2. *The Moabites had denied the superiority of Jehovah over heathen gods, and they should be brought by painful experience to know his supremacy.* "And I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall know that I am the Lord." Says Hengstenberg, "Through the judgments under which Moab falls, it is forced to acknowledge the true Deity of Jehovah, which it did not willingly accept." (See our notes on ch. vi. 7, 10; vii. 4.)

CONCLUSION. 1. *Let those who are avowedly followers of Christ take heed that they do not give occasion to sinners to blaspheme the Name or the cause of God.* Let them show "all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;" "Walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called." 2. *Let those who are not Christians take heed that they do not bring upon themselves the anger of the Lord by speaking against his cause or his people.*—W. J.

Vers. 12—14.—*The judgment of Edom; or, the sin and punishment of revenge.* "Thus saith the Lord God; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance," etc. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, who settled in Mount Seir immediately after the death of his father Isaac. The country in which they dwelt was called Edom, or Idumæa. It was situated south of the territory of Moab; and "it only embraced the narrow mountainous tract (about a hundred miles long by twenty broad) extending along the eastern side of the Arabah, from the northern end of the gulf of Elath to near the southern end of the Dead Sea." Of their religion little is known; but that they were idolaters appears from 2 Chron. xxv. 14, 15, 20, and Josephus, 'Ant.,' xv. 7. 9. Consider—

I. THE HEINOUS SIN OF THE EDOMITES. "Thus saith the Lord God; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them." Notice: 1. *The sin itself.* Revenge is the sin with which the Edomites are here charged. Distinguish between revenge and vengeance. "Revenge is an act of passion; vengeance, of justice; injuries are revenged, crimes are avenged" (Johnson). Vengeance is righteous, calm, majestic; revenge is

wicked, cruel, malignant. The accusation against the Edomites is revenge. Schröder translates, "Because Edom exercises vindictive revenge upon the house of Judah." The hatred of Esau towards his brother Jacob for fraudulently depriving him of his blessing seems to have run down through all his generations. And it was increased by what the Edomites afterwards suffered in conflict with the descendants of Jacob (cf. 1 Sam. xiv. 47; 1 Kings xi. 15, 16; 2 Chron. xxv. 11, 12); although Hengstenberg says "that Edom brought upon himself, by his own conduct, what he formerly, particularly under David, suffered from Judah. For only on this supposition was the revenge sinful." Revenge was prohibited by the holy Law of God as declared in the Old Testament (cf. Lev. xix. 18). And much more so as expressed in the New Testament (cf. Matt. v. 44—48; Rom. xii. 17, 19; Eph. iv. 31). 2. *The manifestation of this sin.* Joel, who probably prophesied in the early years of the reign of King Uzziah, predicts that "Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land" (Joel iii. 19; see also Amos i. 11, 12). But probably the reference in our text is chiefly to the action of Edom during the Chaldean invasion of Judæa. "When Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, the Edomites joined him, and took an active part in the plunder of the city and slaughter of the poor Jews. Their cruelty at that time seems to be especially referred to in the hundred and thirty-seventh psalm: "Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof!" Their conduct at that time is described by the Prophet Obadiah (vers. 10—14). 3. *The aggravations of their sin.* They were kinsfolk of Israel and Judah. In joining Nebuchadnezzar against Judah, they were uniting with a foreigner against those who had descended from the same ancestor as themselves. Moreover, in former times the Israelites had made distinctions in their favour. When they marched to the conquest of Canaan, they were commanded not to contend with the Edomites (Deut. ii. 4, 5); and they observed that command. The Lord also commanded them not to hate the Edomites (Deut. xxiii. 7). Yet the Edomites hated the Jews, and rejoiced in revenging themselves upon them.

II. THE RIGHTEOUS RETRIBUTION OF THE SIN OF THE EDOMITES. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it," etc. (vers. 13, 14). 1. *The judgment inflicted.* Two chief elements of it are mentioned by the prophet—slaughter by the sword, and the laying waste of the land. It is also intimated that the judgment should pass over the whole land. "And I will make it desolate from Teman; even unto Dedan shall they fall by the sword." Or, as some would punctuate, "From Teman even unto Dedan they shall fall by the sword." Teman was a district in the south of Edom, and Dedan was in the north; so that "from Teman unto Dedan" signifies over the entire country. Not in one event alone may we trace the fulfilment of this prediction, but in several. In the time of the Maccabees, Judas the Maccabee slew more than forty thousand Edomites (1 Macc. v. 3; 2 Macc. x. 15—23). About thirty years afterwards, John Hyrcanus turned his forces against Edom, completely subdued the country, and compelled the people to submit to circumcision and to conform to the Jewish religion, or to suffer expatriation. And they were so desirous of remaining in the country of their forefathers, that they yielded to his conditions, and, as Josephus says, "they were hereafter no other than Jews" (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xiii. 9. 1). So complete was their incorporation with the Jews "that the name of Idumæa appears no more in history as a separate kingdom." As Schröder remarks, "The vengeance of God could not in a more marked retribution manifest itself upon Edom than by the extirpation of his nationality, and that precisely in the form of an absorption by Israel." The desolation of the land was at length accomplished by the Mohammedans. "In the seventh century," says Dr. J. L. Porter, "the Mohammedan conquest gave a death-blow to the commerce and prosperity of Edom. Under the withering influence of Mohammedan rule, the great cities fell to ruin, and the country became a desert. The followers of the false prophet were here, as elsewhere, the instruments, in God's hands, for the execution of his judgments." And so "the Edom of prophecy—Edom considered as the enemy of God and the rival of Israel—has perished for ever: all, in that respect, is an untrodden wilderness, a hopeless ruin; and therein the veracity of God's Word finds its verification." 2. *The instruments for the infliction of the judgment.* "I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people

Israel," etc.; "And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble," etc. (Obad. 18). The prophecy points to Judas the Maccabee and his army, and yet more to John Hyrcanus, who completely subjugated the country of Edom, and annihilated the nationality of the Edomites. 3. *The retributory character of the judgment.* "Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them; therefore thus saith the Lord God . . . I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel, . . . and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord God." The Edomites inflicted vindictive revenge upon the Jews; and for so doing they must suffer the vengeance of the Lord Jehovah. "Revenge for revenge." "The Lord is a God of recompenses; he shall surely requite" (Jer. li. 56).

CONCLUSION. Our subject addresses to us: 1. *Warning against estrangement or want of love amongst relatives.* When kinsfolk or former friends become hostile to each other, they are much more embittered than strangers in a similar condition. "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and such contentions are like the bars of a castle" (Prov. xviii. 19); "Love one another with a pure heart fervently." 2. *Warning against encouraging any feeling of revenge.* Such feelings turn the heart which entertains them into a hell; and the entertainment of them awakens the stern displeasure of the Most High. Our Lord says, "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you," etc. (Matt. v. 44, 45). And St. Paul writes, "Render to no man evil for evil . . . Avenge not yourselves, beloved, but give place unto wrath," etc. (Rom. xii. 17, 19—21).—W. J.

Vers. 15—17.—*The heinous sin and severe punishment of the Philistines.* "Thus saith the Lord God; Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge," etc. This paragraph treating of the Philistines is similar in its prominent features to those which dealt with the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites, especially the last. In each case there is a setting forth of the sin and an announcement of the punishment. And there is a close resemblance between the Edomites and the Philistines, both in their sin and in their punishment. With this similarity of essential character in the paragraphs of this chapter, it is not easy to suggest variety of homiletical treatment for each paragraph. In our text we have—

I. A BRIEF STATEMENT OF A LONG COURSE OF HEINOUS SIN. "The Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with despite of soul to destroy it with perpetual enmity." Mark the gradations of their sin as they are indicated in the text. 1. *The sin of the Philistines was hatred against the Jews.* They were a powerful people, occupying territory to the south-west of Judah, and were unvarying in their hostility to the Israelites. Their sin was the very opposite of that love which God commands as the supreme duty of man to his fellow-man: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. xix. 18). And in Christian ethics their sin is equivalent to murder: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John iii. 15). 2. *Their hatred was intense and scornful.* It was no superficial emotion. They took "vengeance with despite of soul." They were hearty and passionate and zealous in their enmity to the Jews. 3. *Their hatred was inveterate.* "The old hatred," or "perpetual enmity." A glance at their history shows this. In the time of the judges "they vexed and oppressed the children of Israel" (Judg. x. 7, 8). Near the close of the career of Eli they defeated Israel in battle with great slaughter, and seized the ark of God (1 Sam. iv. 10, 11). They were conquered by the Israelites under Samuel, and were kept in check all his days (1 Sam. vii. 7—14). But in the days of Saul they again became troublesome, and brought Israel in a measure into subjection to them (1 Sam. xiii. 19, 20). In the battle in which Saul and his sons were slain, they inflicted a disastrous defeat upon Israel (1 Sam. xxxi.). They were vanquished by David. But in after-times they caused much trouble and damage to Judah (2 Chron. xxi. 16, 17; xxviii. 18). And they showed their old animosity by acts of hostility at the time when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. Their hatred was ancient and persistent. 4. *Their hatred was habitually active.* "The Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance." Their enmity existed not simply as an emotion, but found vigorous expression. And it expressed itself, not simply in hostile and bitter words, but in malignant deeds, in revengeful actions. And these deeds were

not occasional, but habitual. They "dealt by revenge," as if it had been their trade or occupation. "A perpetually enduring war," says Schröder, "is the standing feature of the relation, while fixed hostility was the root of it." 5. *This hatred was destructive in its design.* "Have taken vengeance with despite of soul to destroy it with perpetual enmity." The aim of the hostile Philistines was to bring the Jewish nation to an utter end. This was their steadfast purpose. One aspect of hatred is very conspicuous in this brief delineation, and it is as admonitory as it is conspicuous, viz. its tendency to continuance and growth. If animosity be not resisted, if it be not combated by the presentation of prayer to God and by the cultivation and expression of kindness towards men, especially towards the object of our aversion, it will increase in depth and intensity. Hence it is of the utmost importance to check the beginnings of hatred. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and railing be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you."

II. A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT OF SEVERE PUNISHMENT FOR PROTRACTED AND HEINOUS SINS. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines," etc. (vers. 16, 17). We see here: 1. *Punishment of great severity.* "I will execute great vengeance upon them with furious rebukes." Who can conceive the dread severity of the great vengeance of the Almighty with furious rebukes? They who had dealt by revenge and taken vengeance on Israel should suffer the great vengeance of the God of Israel. After the destruction of Jerusalem, when Nebuchadnezzar turned his mighty forces against Egypt, "the result was specially disastrous to the Philistines: Gaza was taken by the Egyptians, and the population of the whole plain was reduced to a mere 'remnant' by the invading armies." 2. *Punishment ending in destruction.* "I will cut off the Cherethites, and destroy the remnant of the sea coast." The name "Cherethites" is given "to the whole of the Philistines, for the sake of the paronomasia." The name signifies "cut off," or "extirpated," and it was to find its fulfilment in their doom. "The destruction of the remnant points to this," says Hengstenberg, "that they shall be destroyed to the last man, as in fact the Philistines have utterly disappeared. It is the great privilege of the people of God, that how heavy soever the judgments of God may be upon them, never will it be said of them, 'I will destroy the remnant.'" They who had made it their object to destroy the Jewish nation should themselves be destroyed by the Almighty. "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you." 3. *Punishment from the hand of God.* "Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines," etc. The Chaldeans and others were but as weapons in the hands of the supreme Sovereign and righteous Judge of all.

> "The Lord sitteth as King for ever:
> He hath prepared his throne for judgment.
> And he shall judge the world in righteousness,
> He shall minister judgment to the peoples in uprightness."

And if men will not be brought to know him by the sweet influences of his grace, then by the stern severities of his vengeance they shall know that he is the Lord.—W. J.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The prophetic messages against Ammon, Moab, Edom, and the Philistines were comparatively short. That against Tyre spreads over three chapters (xxvi. 1—xxix. 18). The special prominence thus given to the latter city was probably due to its political importance in Ezekiel's time, possibly also to the personal knowledge which may be inferred from his minute description of its magnificence and its commerce. It is ushered in with special solemnity as "a word of Jehovah."

Ver. 1.—In the eleventh year, etc. The last date given (ch. xxiv. 1) was the tenth day of the tenth month of the ninth year (*cir.* B.C. 590). We have now come to the eleventh year, on which, on the ninth day of the fourth month, Jerusalem was taken, while its destruction followed in the seventh day of the fifth month (Jer. lii. 6, 12). Here the number of the month is not given in the

Hebrew or the Vulgate, while the LXX. inserts the "first month." In ch. xxxii. 17 we have a like omission, and in both cases it is natural to assume an error of transcription. The tidings of the capture may have reached both Tyre and Tel-Abib, and Ezekiel may have heard of the temper in which the former had received them, just as he had heard how the nations named in the previous chapter had exulted in the fall, imminent and, as they thought, inevitable, of the holy city.

Ver. 2.—**Because that Tyrus**, etc. As the nearest great commercial city, the Venice of the ancient world, Tyre, from the days of David (2 Sam. v. 11) and Solomon (1 Kings v. 1) onward, had been prominent in the eyes of the statesmen and prophets of Judah; and Ezekiel follows in the footsteps of Joel iii. 4; Amos i. 9, 10; Isa. xxiii., in dealing with it. The description in vers. 5 and 14 points, not to the city on the mainland, the old Tyre of Josh. xix. 29, which had been taken by Shalmaneser and was afterwards destroyed by Alexander the Great, but to the island-city, the new Tyre, which was, at this time, the emporium of the ancient world. The extent of her commerce will meet us in ch. xxvii. Here, too, as in the case of the nations in ch. xxv., Ezekiel's indignation is roused by the exulting selfishness with which Tyre had looked on the downfall (actual or imminent, as before) of Jerusalem. "Now," her rulers seem to have said, "we shall be the only power in the land of Canaan." Jerusalem, that had been **the gate of the peoples**, was now broken. The name thus given may imply either (1) that Jerusalem was regarded as to a considerable extent a commercial city, carrying on much intercourse with the nations with which she was in alliance (ch. xxiii. 40, 41; 1 Kings ix. 26—28; xxii. 48; Isa. ii. 7; Herod., iii. 5, of Cadytis, *i.e.* probably Jerusalem); or (2) that its temple had, under Hezekiah and Josiah, drawn many proselytes from the neighbouring nations, as in Ps. lxxxvii. 4—6, and was looking forward to a yet fuller confluence of men of all races, as in the prophecies of Micah iv. 1, 2 and Isa. ii. 2, 3—expectations which may well have become known to a city like Tyre, in frequent intercourse with Judah. "Now," the Tyrians might say, "that hope is shattered." **I shall be replenished.** The interpolated "now" indicates what is, of course, implied, that Tyre expects her prosperity to increase in proportion to the decline and fall of Jerusalem.

Ver. 3.—**As the sea causeth**, etc. We note the special appropriateness of the comparison to the position of the island city.

Ver. 5.—**It shall be a place for the spreading of nets**, etc. The prediction is repeated in ver. 14, and after many changes and changes, apparent revival followed by another period of decay, the present condition of Tyre strikingly corresponds with it. The travellers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries report that "its inhabitants are only a few poor wretches that harbour in vaults and subsist upon fishing" (Mandrell, in 1697); that the number of those inhabitants was "only ten, Turks and Christians" (Hasselquist, in 1751); that there were, a little later on, "fifty or sixty poor families" (Volney, in 1766). During the present century there has been a partial revival, and Porter, in 1858, estimates its population at from three to four thousand. The present state of its harbour, as compared with that of Beyrout, is against any future expansion of its commerce ('Dict. Bible,' *s.v.* "Tyre").

Ver. 6.—**The daughters** in the field are, according to the usual symbolism of prophecy, the subject or allied cities on the mainland.

Ver. 7.—**I will bring against thee**, etc. There is a special emphasis of abruptness in the way in which Ezekiel brings in the name of the great Chaldean conqueror (we note, by the way, that he adopts the less common spelling of the name), of whom he speaks as "king of kings." The title is used by Daniel (ii. 37) of Nebuchadnezzar, and by Artaxerxes of himself (Ezra vii. 12), by Darius in the Nakshi Rustam inscription ('Records of the Past,' v. 151), by Tiglath-Pileser, with the addition of "lord of lords" (ibid., v. 8).

Vers. 8—10.—(For the usual operations of a siege, see notes on ch. iv. 1, 2.) The buckler was the roof of shields under which the besiegers protected themselves from the missiles of the besieged. For **engines of war**, read *battering-rams*; for **wheels**, *waggons*. The final result will be that the breach will be made, with results such as those described in ver. 11.

Ver. 11.—**Thy strong garrisons**; literally, *the pillars of thy strength* (Revised Version). So the Vulgate, *nobiles statuæ*. So the word is used in Isa. xix. 19; Jer. xliii. 13; 2 Kings iii. 2. The words probably refer to the two famous columns standing in the temple of the Tyrian Hercules, one of gold and one of emerald (possibly malachite or lapis-lazuli), as symbols of strength, or as pedestals surmounted by a statue of Baal (Herod., ii. 44).

Ver. 12.—**Thy pleasant houses**; Hebrew, *houses of desire*. The palaces of the merchant-princes of Tyre, stately as those of Genoa or Venice. **In the midst of the water.** We are again reminded that it is the island-city of which the prophet speaks.

Ver. 13.—**The noise of thy songs.** As in the imagery of Isa. xxiii. 16, Tyre seems to have been famous for its music—the operatic

city, as it were, of the ancient world—eminent no less for its culture than its commerce (comp. ch. xxviii. 13). The description of the desolation of the captured city is summed up once more in the words of ver. 5. It shall be a place to "spread nets upon."

Ver. 15.—**Shall not the isles, etc.?** The Hebrew word is used in a wider sense, as including all settlements on the sea-coast as well as islands. So it is used of Philistia (Isa. xx. 6), and of the maritime states of Asia Minor (Dan. xi. 18), of the east and south coasts of Arabia (ch. xxvii. 15). Looking to the extent of commerce described in ch. xxvii., it probably includes all the Mediterranean settlements of the Tyrians, possibly also those in the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. The report of the fall of Tyre was to spread far and wide.

Ver. 16.—**The princes of the sea** are not the kings of the isles, but the merchant-princes of the city (Isa. xxiii. 8). They shall lay aside their robes of state—Tyrian purple embroidered with gold and silver—and shall put on the garments of mourners. Jonah iii. 6 presents an interesting parallel. The word **thrones** is used, as in 1 Sam. iv. 13, for any chair of state, as that of priest or judge (Prov. ix. 14; Esth. iii. 1), as well as for the specifically kingly throne. For the most part, however, the later meaning is dominant.

Ver. 17.—**Inhabited of seafaring,** etc.; Hebrew, *from the seas.* The sense is the same, but we lose the poetry of the original in the paraphrase. Possibly, however, the phrase may represent the position of Tyre as rising out of the sea or as deriving its wealth from it. Ewald adopts a conjectural reading, which gives "destroyed from the seas;" or, with another conjecture, "She that was settled from the days of the remote past."

Ver. 18.—It is noticeable that the commercial policy of Tyre is not represented as having been oppressive. **The isles** do not exult in their deliverance, but mourn over the captured city whose commerce had contributed to their prosperity. The "terror" of ver. 17 is rather the impression of awe and wonder made on all who came to it.

Ver. 19.—**When I shall bring up the sea.** The picture of desolation is completed. The sea washes over the bare rock that was once covered with the palaces of the merchant-princes.

Ver. 20.—**When I shall bring thee down,** etc. The **pit** is *sheol,* Hades, the unseen world of the dead. The image may have been suggested by Isa. xiv. 9, where it is used of Babylon. It was obviously one on which the mind of Ezekiel dwelt, and is reproduced in ch. xxxii. 17—32. Here, apparently, the sinking in the depth of the waters (ver. 19) is thought of as leading to that world of the dead that lay beneath them. **The people of old time** may possibly include the races of the old world that were submerged in the waters of the Flood. The imagery of Ps. lxxxviii. 3—7 seems to have been floating before the prophet's mind. **I shall set glory;** better, *will set.* The contrast drawn is that between the shadow-world of the dead, and the earth with its living inhabitants. There Jehovah would establish his glory, would, sooner or later, manifest his kingdom, while Tyre and its pomp should be no more, belonging only to the past. Conjectural readings and renderings have been suggested as follows: (1) Hitzig, "And thou no longer shinest with glory in the *land of the living.*" (2) Hävernick and Kliefoth, "That I no longer produce anything glorious from thee in the land of the living." (3) Ewald, "That thou mayest not remain (or stand) in the land of the living." I have adopted Keil's interpretation of the Authorized Version.

Ver. 22.—**I will make thee a terror.** Ewald translates, "To sudden death will I bring thee," which corresponds with the margin of the Revised Version, *I will make thee a destruction.*

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Tyre, the England of antiquity.* We have here an outline of the great, desolating judgment that was to fall upon Tyre; it is more fully described in the succeeding verses of the chapter, and lamented over in the next chapter. There are several points in the condition and history of Tyre that call for especial attention to the fate of this famous city; but the resemblance between Tyre and England is so striking, that we may feel much more interest in Ezekiel's utterances when we consider their bearing on our own country in the present day.

I. THE SIMILAR PROSPERITY OF TYRE AND ENGLAND. 1. *In wealth.* Tyre was one of the richest cities of the East, if not the very richest. Her splendour was renowned, and the wealth of her merchants was proverbial. Like England to-day, she was envied by other peoples for her worldly prosperity. 2. *Through commerce.* The wealth of Tyre was not drawn from rich mines or fertile soil of her own territory. It was not booty taken in war, like that of Babylon. Her riches came by trade. Her princes

were merchants. Thus she was like our "nation of shopkeepers." 3. *By seafaring.* The early commerce of Syria was carried on by Midianites over the desert (Gen. xxxvii. 28); but the later and more profitable commerce was over the waters westward, round the coast of the Mediterranean and to as far as Cornwall in Britain, perhaps even to the distant Azores. Like Venice in the Middle Ages, like Spain later, like the Netherlands after the Reformation, like England to-day, Tyre in ancient times was the mistress of the sea. Hence a certain cosmopolitan character. 4. *With constructive art.* The vast foundations of Baalbec tell of the building powers of Tyre. Solomon's temple was a grand specimen of Tyrian architecture, built with Tyrian art. We do not equal those great builders in originality. But inventive genius and manufacturing energy are characteristic of our race. Thus the material splendour of Tyre has passed to England.

II. THE FATE OF TYRE A WARNING FOR ENGLAND. The splendour and prosperity of Tyre did not save her from ruin. Can we see in her fall any hint of a similar danger threatening our own country? Consider both its immediate cause and the providential necessity that lay behind. 1. *The immediate cause.* Tyre was overthrown by Babylon (ver. 7). She was not able to withstand the terrific onward march of the Eastern power. She was strong at sea, but feeble ashore. She was not a military power. She proves that wealth will not protect from ruin, but will rather invite it. The wealth of London is a temptation to the invader. Prosperity is not its own security. 2. *The providential necessity.* Wealth enervates, and no doubt Tyre was weakened by luxury. But behind such natural operations God, the Judge of all the earth, saw the sin of Tyre. She was greedy and selfish (ver. 2). Commerce does not always win friends. By competition it stirs up jealousy. When deceptive or overreaching, it rouses the antagonism of those on whom it preys. Tyre was a most wicked city. Her very religion was shamefully immoral. Though the temple of Jehovah was built by Tyrian artists, the worship of Jehovah was not accepted by the Tyrian citizens. Like Tyre, we may build a temple for others, and never worship in it ourselves. We may patronize religion, and be none the better for it. We may send the gospel to the heathen, and become pagans at home. The temple they built for the Jews did not save the Tyrians. Nothing can save England but the uprightness and the personal religion of her people.

Ver. 2 (last clause, "I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste").—*An unworthy anticipation.* The destruction of Jerusalem afforded delights to Tyre, because the mercenary Tyrians imagined that they would gain by the loss of the Jewish capital. This was an unworthy anticipation, and the event proved that it was founded on a delusion. Tyre did not ultimately profit by the ruin of Jerusalem.

I. IT IS WICKED TO HOPE FOR GAIN THROUGH THE DISTRESS OF OTHERS. Tyre should have sympathized with her old ally in the time of adversity. But her commercial greed bears down all thoughts of friendship and all feelings of commiseration. She only looks at the direful event as an opportunity for enlarging her trade. Nations are guilty of this wickedness when they exult in the downfall and misery of their neighbours, expecting to reap a harvest of gain for themselves. Thus while two peoples are in the agonies of war, a third may be delighted at the opportunity of coining wealth by seizing the ground for commerce which the belligerents have been forced to relinquish. It may come more nearly home to us to see the same greedy spirit in the shopkeeper who inwardly rejoices over the bankruptcy of his rival, believing that now the custom will be all in his own hands. The same miserable, mercantile selfishness is even witnessed in ecclesiastical regions, when one Church takes pleasure in the misfortunes of a neighbouring Church, expecting thus to have grist brought to its mill. In this case there is far less excuse, for Christians profess brotherhood, and a true Church exists for the glory of God, not for the pomp and aggrandizement of its members. God is not glorified when one Church fattens on the wreck of another Church.

II. THIS UNWORTHY ANTICIPATION IS DOOMED TO ULTIMATE FAILURE. Tyre did not gain by the overthrow of Jerusalem; on the contrary, she was swept away by the same besom of destruction that she had greedily rejoiced to see turned against her ancient ally. We are members one of another. What is hurtful to one part of the body injures the

whole body. War brings nothing but loss in the long run. Selfish commerce does not ultimately pay. Greedy competition overreaches itself and reaps a Nemesis of general commercial depression. It is often found that the ruin of one house of business is followed by that of others. A market is injured, and all concerned with it suffer. Selfishness, envy, jealousy, and greed destroy mutual confidence. They introduce a condition in which every man's hand is against his fellow. This must be one of general disaster, because it is one of general distrust. We do not suffer in the end by being magnanimous. Assuredly these considerations apply with double force to religious communities. The Church that exults in the downfall of its rival cannot truly prosper. Here, indeed, what hurts a member of the body hurts the whole body. Far wiser as well as higher was the spirit of St. Paul, who rejoiced in the preaching of the gospel by all means, even though, in some cases, it involved enmity to himself (Phil. i. 18).

Ver. 8.—*Divine antagonism.* I. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR GOD TO BE IN ANTAGONISM TO MEN. We have come to regard the quarrel between man and God as one-sided. Now, it is one-sided in its origin, its evil, and its malice. God never wishes to be at war with men, and never originates any breach of the peace. His conduct throughout is just, considerate, marvellously long-suffering. Even when the conflict is forced on to an extremity, God never ceases to love his foolish, fallen children. He is ever waiting to be gracious, longing for signs of contrition and a door of reconciliation. The origin of the quarrel, its evil, and its malice are all on our side. But this does not mean that God takes no part in it, that he only stands before us as an impassive and immoble granite wall that we may dash our heads against, but that never moves an inch against us; much less that he gives way before our rebellious onslaught, and weakly yields to wilful opposition on our part. We can provoke the Lord to anger (Ps. lxxviii. 58). "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Ps. vii. 11). As Lord and Judge, he executes sentence. By necessity of righteousness, he sets himself in array against his sinful creatures.

II. SIN PROVOKES THE ANTAGONISM OF GOD. God was angry with Tyre for its wickedness, and his anger was not mitigated by the fact that the greedy were rejoicing over the calamities of their neighbours. All sin rouses the anger and active opposition of God. He is not opposed to any one from prejudice, as men are too often opposed to their neighbours. But sin, which is opposition to the will of God, must needs be opposed by him if that will is to be done on earth as it is in heaven. This, then, is not a question for a few rare souls in the awful condition of victims of Divine displeasure. Every sinner has God for his opponent. The fatal punishment of others ought to be a warning. It was not so taken by Tyre. Instead of seeing a dreadful lesson in the ruin of Jerusalem, the Tyrians rejoiced over it. Such wickedness the more stirred up the antagonism of God. Now, these Tyrians were heathen people, judged only according to their light. Yet they were condemned, for the ground of judgment was moral evil, not defective theology. But much more must God be in antagonism to those who have fuller light and yet rebel against him. "Therefore thou art inexcusable," etc. (Rom. ii. 1).

III. CHRIST HAS COME TO PUT AN END TO THE DIVINE ANTAGONISM. This does not mean that God is reluctant to sheathe his sword, till Christ succeeds in persuading him to do so; for our Lord was sent by his Father for the express purpose of making peace. But the cause of the antagonism had to be removed, and Christ came to effect that end by making his great atonement for sin. Through this also he brought men into a new state of repentance, and reconciled them to God. Now, we are under the doom of Divine antagonism, so long as we live in unrepented sin. But the offer of the gospel shows the way of escape from it in free forgiveness and perfect restoration to the favour of God.

Ver. 7.—*The mission of Nebuchadnezzar.* I. GOD EMPLOYS HUMAN AGENTS. He does not shatter Tyre as he created the world, with a word. Nor does he send Michael and the hosts of heaven with flaming swords to smite the devoted city. The devastating conquests of Babylon effect his purpose. Nebuchadnezzar is his "servant" (Jer. xxv. 9). In the happier work of bringing salvation to a ruined world God uses human agents.

God appeared incarnate in a human form. Apostles were next sent forth to proclaim the glad tidings. In the present day God uses human ministers of justice and human ministers of mercy.

II. GOD EMPLOYS AS HIS AGENTS MEN WHO DO NOT KNOW HIM. This is the singular fact brought before us in relation to the use of Nebuchadnezzar as a minister of Divine judgment. The King of Babylon was a heathen monarch, who did not acknowledge the true God (see Dan. iii. 15). Yet he was impressed into the Divine service. We may serve God unconsciously. It is possible to be an instrument for effecting his purposes even when we are thinking that we are resisting them. The Jews who crucified Christ were unconsciously the means of leading his work on to completion. Thus God controls men. He claims all; he uses all. For he is the God of all, though all do not own or even know him.

III. GOD EMPLOYS BAD MEN AS HIS AGENTS. The worst thing about Nebuchadnezzar was not his paganism, for which he was not responsible, as he had inherited it from his ancestors; but his wickedness, his cruelty, his ambitious greed and intolerant despotism. Yet not only was this man unconsciously enlisted in the service of God. His very wrath was made to praise God, and the very exercise of his wicked disposition was just the thing that carried out the Divine purpose. The nations were chastised according to the ends of Divine justice by the unjust and wicked scourge of Nebuchadnezzar's invasions. This wonderful fact does not solve the enigma of evil, but it helps to lighten the burden of that great mystery. We see that evil itself may be turned into a ministry of good.

IV. GOD'S EMPLOYMENT OF HUMAN AGENTS IS NO JUSTIFICATION OF THEIR CONDUCT. The use of their action is no defence for it. God does not approve of Nebuchadnezzar because he seizes that cruel monarch's plans and makes them to fall in with his own holy purposes. Nebuchadnezzar must be content to be judged by the moral character of his deeds, not by the unsuspected Divine issue of them. It is no excuse for sin that God may overrule it for good. The Jews were not exonerated from blame in rejecting Christ because this rejection was the means of the world's redemption. We may be used by God to high ends, and then cast away as worthless souls unless we serve him consciously and do his will from our hearts.

Ver. 13.—*Songs silenced.* Songs may be silenced either because they are found to be unworthy to be sung or because the singers are no longer able to sing them. The harp may be broken, or the minstrel may be in no mood to touch its chords. Our old joys may be given up for either of these reasons. We may find them to be unworthy, or, if no fault is discovered in them, sorrow may extinguish them.

I. SONGS ARE SILENCED BY THE DISCOVERY OF THEIR UNWORTHINESS. The songs of Tyre were not like those of Zion. Heathen songs are too often degrading to the singers of them, because false religion and immoral conduct are therein celebrated. There are pleasures of sin which it is a shame to permit unchecked. The awakening of conscience necessarily extinguishes such pleasures and stills their accompanying songs. In this way the thoughtless world may be brought to regard religion as a gloomy, repressive influence, inimical to joy, and therefore very unattractive. We should look a little deeper. The wicked song must be stopped at any cost. But it need not be followed by a reign of perpetual silence. A new song may follow, and this may be as joyous as it is innocent. Christianity is not the enemy of gladness, it is only the enemy of wickedness; and when joy is purged from evil, joy is found to be deeper, stronger, and sweeter than ever it was while intoxicated with the old corruption.

II. SONGS ARE SILENCED BY SORROW. There is a time for everything, and singing is not always seasonable. Nothing can be more unnatural than a forced song. Now, there are sorrows that quench the most vigorous soul's delights, as there are storms that beat down the strongest wings. Such were the calamities that accompanied Nebuchadnezzar's invasion. Such too were the troubles of the Jewish captives when they hung their harps upon the willows, and refused to sing the Lord's song in a strange land (Ps. cxxxvii. 2—4). But there will be worse causes of the silence of old songs in God's future judgments on sin. Pleasure is no refuge from trouble. It tempts to hopes that are delusive. No one is safe just because he feels himself happy. Cheerful people may be in as great danger as despondent ones.

III. SONGS ARE SILENCED TO SAVE THE SINGER. Tyre is made desolate utterly and eternally. The songs of her gay citizens are no more heard. Her very rocks are scraped bare, and the fisherman spreads his nets on her once populous places. Thus cities are doomed to irretrievable ruin. But it is not so with souls. There are restoration and redemption for individual men. At all events, though a dark shadow of mystery hangs over the grave, this is the case on earth. Now, it would be best for the singer to silence his old thoughtless song in the sober reflection of repentance. The silence may be a first step to better things. We are too noisy and too superficial. The hush of demonstrative life gives us an opportunity of hearing the still small voice of God. When our songs are silenced we may listen to the songs of the angels. Then that heavenly music may teach us to tune our harps to its higher melody and inspire our souls with new songs of redemption (Rev. v. 9).

Ver. 16.—"*The princes of the sea.*" The Tyrians were a seafaring people on a large scale. Unlike the poor Philistines, who did not go beyond the fisherman's simple toil, those adventurers swept the Mediterranean with their fleets, and even ventured to distant shores of the Atlantic. They had the advantages and the evils of a great maritime nation.

I. THE PRINCES OF THE SEA GATHERED RICHES. The merchants of Tyre were princes. Wealth was got by industry, daring, and enterprise. Thus the Tyrians anticipated the good fortune of the English. Prosperity is not often won except by means of energy and adventure. When the spirit that urges on daring attempts is enervated by luxury, the success that it once achieved is surely doomed. It is happy when that spirit is transformed into a higher character, and seeks for better returns than bales of merchandise. We cannot but feel that the voyages of the *Beagle* and the *Challenger* are nobler in this respect, as their aim was to gather treasures of knowledge. But better still is it when the command of the waters is used for the promotion of peace, the extension of liberty, and the check of the slave-trade, and above all, the propagation of Christianity.

II. THE PRINCES OF THE SEA UNITED RACES. In ancient times the Tyrians were the great link of connection between the East and the West. Through them the venerable civilization of Asia woke up the genius of Europe, as yet slumbering in unconscious barbarism. Tyre gave the alphabet to Europe. Thus she laid the foundation of Greek culture and started European literature on its wonderful course. She gave more than she took. Immense and untold good comes from the peaceful intercommunication of races.

III. THE PRINCES OF THE SEA RAN GREAT RISKS. They trusted their wealth to the treacherous waves. The Merchant of Venice finds himself beggared by unexpected calamities. The greatest wealth is usually won by the most uncertain means, *i.e.* by foreign trade and home speculation. This is a warning to the prosperous not to put their trust in riches which so easily take wings and fly away. The fate of Tyre should drive us further to seek those better riches in the heavenly treasury, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal (Matt. vi. 20). If even the princes of the sea were ruined, who can be satisfied to rest in the greatest earthly success?

IV. THE PRINCES OF THE SEA LIVED LOW LIVES. Princes they were, but not saints. Their mercenary character was not hidden by all the splendour of their surroundings. In their gorgeous palaces, among their well-stocked bazaars, with their heavy-laden ships on many waters, they were the cynosure of every eye. Yet in God's sight they were "miserable, and blind, and naked," for they were but mammon-worshippers. More enlightened than the Tyrian merchants, Englishmen will be guilty of greater sin and folly if they fall down and worship the same image of gold.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—*The jealousy of Tyre.* It is a singular fact that, in his reproaches and censures directed against the states and tribes by which Israel was surrounded, Ezekiel does not confine himself to a condemnation of their idolatries and their vices and crimes

generally, but refers especially to the attitude these peoples had taken towards his own countrymen, their land, and their metropolis. No doubt there was patriotism in this way of looking at matters. But the frequency and evident deliberateness of such references show that it was not mere personal and patriotic feeling which animated Ezekiel. He spoke as a religious teacher and as the prophet of the Lord; and he recognized, as underlying hostility to Israel, hostility to Israel's God. It is observable that in the powerful and eloquent denunciation of Tyre's offences, in the awful prediction of Tyre's impending fate, which forms so interesting and instructive a portion of this book, Ezekiel puts in the very forefront of his indictment Tyre's attitude towards Jerusalem, the Hebrew metropolis. Tyre's jealousy of Jerusalem's historic power, prosperity, and wealth, Tyre's malicious delight in Jerusalem's humiliation and fall, are adduced as reasons for the Divine displeasure, and for the execution of the sentence of Divine condemnation. The proud queen of the seas was to be smitten and deposed, not only because of her luxury, pride, and idolatry, but especially because of her jealousy and malevolence towards the beloved and chosen city of Jehovah.

I. THE FACT UPON WHICH THIS JEALOUSY WAS BASED, *i.e.* THE FORMER PROSPERITY OF JERUSALEM. According to the poetical language of the prophet, Jerusalem had been "the gate of the peoples." In the reign of Solomon especially, and to some extent subsequently, the metropolis of the Jewish people had been an emporium of commerce. Its situation in some degree fitted it to be the centre of communication between the great Eastern countries, and Egypt on the south, and the Mediterranean and its traffic Westwards. We are not accustomed to think of Jerusalem in this light; but this verse in Ezekiel's prophecies brings before our minds the unquestionable fact that there was a time when this city was a mart in which the surrounding nations were wont to exchange their produce and their commodities.

II. THE REJOICING TO WHICH THIS JEALOUSY LED, *i.e.* IN THE DOWNFALL OF JERUSALEM. "She is broken," was the exulting exclamation of Tyre upon beholding the distress of her rival. That Jerusalem deserved her fate there is no room for doubting; yet it was not generous in Tyre thus to triumph over the misfortunes and calamities of her neighbour. The wealth and prosperity of the Jewish capital was about to end; the days of her glory were over; her streets were to be forsaken; the caravans of the merchants were no more to thread their way through the proud gates of the city. And in this change, in these disasters, Tyre rejoiced.

III. THE HOPE WITH WHICH THIS JEALOUSY WAS ASSOCIATED, *i.e.* THE EXTENSION OF THE PROSPERITY OF TYRE. The Phœnician city anticipated that she would gain what Jerusalem was about to lose: "I shall be replenished, now that she is laid waste." The greatness, opulence, and renown of Tyre were such that it seems scarcely credible that her prosperity could be affected by anything which could happen to a small and inland capital such as Jerusalem. Yet it is evident that the Tyrian spirit was a spirit of selfishness, exclusiveness, and grasping. Nothing was too great for Tyre's ambition, nothing too small to be beneath her notice and cupidity.

IV. THE MEANNESS WHICH THIS JEALOUSY REVEALED. In what follows Ezekiel displays the pomp, splendour, and magnificence of the great seaport of Phœnicia; it is strange that he should put in the forefront of his address to Tyre this imputation of littleness. There is a reason for this; it may be that the prophet spoke, not only as a patriot who resented Tyre's jealousy, but as a religious teacher for whom moral distinctions were all-important, and for whom a moral fault was of more consequence than all material splendour.

V. THE DISPLEASURE WHICH THIS JEALOUSY EXCITED IN THE MIND OF THE DIVINE KING AND JUDGE. "I," says God—"I am against thee, O Tyre!" The city which had envied and hated his own Jerusalem, the seat of his worship, and the metropolis of his chosen; the city which was pained by Jerusalem's prosperity, and which rejoiced in Jerusalem's fall,—incurred the indignation as well as the disapproval of the Most High. For dispositions were revealed discreditable to human nature, and repugnant to Divine purity. Because Tyre was against Jerusalem, the Lord God was against Tyre.—T.

Vers. 3—6.—*The fate of Tyre.* From such obscure peoples as the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites, who—except for their occasional association with Israel—are quite aside from the world's history, the prophet passes to deal with Tyre, one of the

greatest and most commanding cities whose deeds and fame adorn the annals of mankind. The Ruler of men does not, indeed, allow the meanest to defy his authority with impunity; his sway extends to the most insignificant of peoples, of tribes. But on the other hand, the proudest and the mightiest are subject to his control, and, when rebellious and defiant, must feel the weight of his irresistible hand.

I. THE GREATNESS OF TYRE. The elements of this greatness, the causes which conspired to produce it, were many and various. There may be noticed: 1. Its commanding maritime situation. Partly upon a rock, partly upon the mainland, Tyre sat—a queen. To the east, the north, the south, were countries which poured their produce into the Phœnician port; before her, to the west, were the waters of the great sea, upon whose shores lay the great states and cities of the ancient world. Tyre was thus the highway of the nations. 2. Its commerce. This was carried on with all the known countries accessible to the Tyrian fleets. Her supremacy upon the sea gave Tyre a foremost position among the nations; her adventurous mariners not only visited every port of the Mediterranean, they passed the Pillars of Hercules, and traded with "the islands of the West." 3. Its wealth. Every nation paid tribute to Tyre. The exchange, the mart, of the world, it acquired and retained riches scarcely equalled. 4. Its splendour—such as is described by Ezekiel—was the natural result of the opulence of its enterprising merchants and sea-captains. 5. Its political power was out of all proportion to its territory, its population; its alliance was sought, and its hostility was dreaded.

II. THE ENEMIES OF TYRE. These were many and formidable. It is a sad symptom of human depravity that unusual prosperity should excite general dislike, jealousy, envy, and ill will. "Many nations came up against Tyre, as the sea causeth his waves to come up." But some of these adversaries Tyre could treat with derision or contempt. This was not so, however, with Babylon. A different type of civilization and national life was no doubt exhibited in the great kingdom of the East; but the population and armies of Babylonia were enormous, and the resources of the kingdom all but inexhaustible. When the King of Babylon turned his arms against Tyre, brave and powerful as was the regal city by the sea, there was no disguising the fact that the time of trial and of danger had come.

III. THE SIEGE AND CONQUEST OF TYRE. It is matter of history that the prophet's predictions were fulfilled. Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon came up against Tyre, and, notwithstanding its boasted impregnability, laid siege to it, and directed against it all the vast military resources of his kingdom. For long years the siege was maintained. The besieged, having open communication by sea, were able to withstand the assaults of the enemy; and it was only the patience and indomitable perseverance of the Babylonians that gave them the final victory.

IV. THE DESTRUCTION AND DESOLATION OF TYRE. A more striking and detailed prediction than this was never uttered; and never was prediction more strikingly and literally fulfilled. The downfall of Tyre was complete. The walls and towers of the city were broken down. The rock upon which she stood—a stronghold of defiance—was left bare and desolate. The nets of the solitary fisher were spread where magnificence and revelry had reigned. Tyre became a spoil to the nations. Her dependencies were vanquished and destroyed with her; in her they had trusted, in her favour they had basked, and in her ruin they were overwhelmed. The destruction and desolation were in awful contrast to the light and glory, the splendour and power, of bygone days.

APPLICATION. The time of national greatness and prosperity is to any people a time of trial. Then especially does it behove a nation to beware of pride and self-confidence. For the rebellious, contumacious, and ungodly there is assuredly retribution prepared. The King of all is God of hosts, and he never wants means and agencies to carry out his own righteous and judicial purposes. Resistance to God is vain; it can last but for a short time. And every nation must learn that the Lord is God alone.—T.

Vers. 7—14.—*The besieging of Tyre.* The fate foretold for the famous city is here related, so to speak, beforehand, with singular copiousness and exactness of detail.

I. THE ENEMY—THE KING OF BABYLON. Tyre had many foes, but at most of them she could afford to laugh, for they had no power to carry their hostility into effect. But Nebuchadnezzar, the king of kings, was an enemy that none could despise. His

power and his resources were such as to render him formidable even to the mightiest. Flushed with previous successes, confident in the irresistible force of his arms, this puissant monarch, in unconscious obedience to Divine behests, turned his sword against the proud mistress of the seas.

II. THE HOSTILE ARMY AND THE APPARATUS OF WAR. Ezekiel describes, with the accuracy and minuteness of one who beheld it, the force which the King of Babylon directed against Tyre. We see the dreaded conqueror of the nations advance from the north-east "with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and a company of much people." The undertaking was only possible to a power which commanded abundance of military resources, and which was able to bring up successive reinforcements, and to continue warlike operations through the changing fortunes and the long delays often incident to ancient campaigns. All that was necessary for his purpose, Nebuchadnezzar knew, before he commenced operations, that he could command.

III. THE SIEGE. The several stages of this enterprise are described as by an eye-witness. First, engagements take place with the neighbouring powers dependent upon and in alliance with Tyre. These are defeated, and their opposition is subdued. Then forts are constructed and a mount is raised from which the besiegers can direct their attack against the beleaguered city. Further, battering-engines are brought forward to play against the walls, and the towers are assaulted by the battle-axes of the besiegers. The dust raised by the galloping horses marks where the cavalry repel the sally from the garrison. The sights of warfare rise before the eye, its sounds salute and deafen the ear. Through long years these military manœuvres go forward with changing fortune; yet leaving the city weaker and less able, even with the open communication seawards, to sustain the siege.

IV. THE ASSAULT, CONQUEST, AND SUBJUGATION. At length the fatal breach is made in the city wall, and we seem to see the victorious army rush forward to overpower the gallant but now disheartened defenders. The walls shake at the noise of the horsemen, the waggons, and the chariots, as the conquerors pour into the streets of the city. The conquering troops, mad with long-delayed success, ride over and cut down every armed man they meet, and even slay the defenceless inhabitants with the sword. The famous city, which had boasted itself invincible and impregnable, is taken and occupied by the Babylonian forces.

V. THE SPOILING AND DESTRUCTION. The riches and merchandise fall a prey into the hands of the victors, who are satiated with booty. The monuments of Tyrian pride and grandeur are levelled in the dust. The fortifications are demolished, the pleasant houses, luxurious abodes of merchant-princes, are pulled down, and the stone and timber are flung into the sea. Precious goods are appropriated or wantonly destroyed. As ever in warfare, so here, the spoils go to the conquerors. *Væ victis!*

VI. THE DESOLATION AND WASTE. In those palaces and halls were once heard the songs of joy and of love, of feasting and of mirth—the strains of music vibrating from harp and lyre, and breathing from the tuneful flute. Now a mournful silence reigns, broken only by the cry of the sea-bird or the plash of the wind-smitten waves. In those harbours rode but lately the fleets laden with the commerce of the world, and Tyrian merchants gazed with pride upon their noble and richly laden argosies. Now the fisherman spreads his nets upon the deserted rocks, and looks wistfully over the forsaken roadsteads and the waste of waters where no sail curves before the wind or glitters in the sunshine. "The Lord has spoken it," and what he has said has come to pass. The Tyrian splendour and opulence were of this world, and they are no more. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*—T.

Vers. 15—21.—*Glory departed.* A more imaginative and pathetic picture than that painted in these words will scarcely be found in revelation, or indeed in all literature. The anticipation of Tyre's destruction seems to have awakened all the poetry of the prophet's nature. And no wonder; for never was a contrast more marked and more significant than that between Tyre in its grandeur and Tyre in its desolation. The isles shake with the resounding crash of the city's fall. The groans of the wounded and the dying are heard afar. Princes exchange their splendour for trembling and astonishment. The city strong in the sea has fallen weak and helpless in the day of Divine judgment. And the seamen who were Tyre's glory and security are no more

to be found. Terror and trembling are upon those who dwell in the islands of the deep. Where Tyre reared herself in opulence, grandeur, and pride, the sea breaks upon the deserted rocks, and upon the ruins strewn in disorder by the lonely shore. The waters engulf the merchants, the seafaring men, and all those who minister to the pomp and pleasures of a wealthy and luxurious city. Tyre is as though it had not been; men seek the city, and it is not found.

I. THE GRIEF AND LAMENTATION OF THOSE WHO SHARED IN THE CITY'S PROSPERITY AND GREATNESS, AND WHO LOSE AND SUFFER BY ITS FALL. Some survived the destruction of Tyre, to cherish the memory of days of wealth and feasting, haughtiness and boasting. Some escaped with life, but with the loss of all which to them made life precious. And others, who had brought their merchandise to the great Phœnician emporium, now found no market for the commodities they produced. For all such *material* loss gave sincerity and even bitterness to their mourning and woe.

II. THE GRIEF AND LAMENTATION OF THOSE WHO WITNESSED THE CITY'S DESTRUCTION, AND WHO WERE IMPRESSED AND APPALLED BY THE SPECTACLE. Ezekiel himself was one of these. Even the conquerors could scarcely fail to feel the pathos of the situation, and to cherish some sympathy for the city whose splendour and power their arms had brought to an end. The ruin of Tyre was a loss to the nations of the world. Embodying, as the city did, the world-spirit, civic and commercial greatness, it must needs have awakened poignant feelings of desolation in the hearts of many who had no personal, material interest in Tyrian commerce. The lesson of the frailty and perishableness of earthly greatness, even if its *moral* side was missed, could not but impress the *historical imagination*.

III. THE GRIEF AND LAMENTATION OF THOSE WHO IN AFTER-TIME INQUIRE FOR THE CITY WHOSE GREATNESS AND SPLENDOUR ARE RECORDED IN TRADITION AND IN HISTORY. The traveller who, impelled by curiosity or by *historical* interest, seeks for the site of Tyre the magnificent, learns that every trace of the city has vanished. Some ruined, deserted cities, famous in story, leave behind them some ruin, some memorial, to which imagination may attach the traditions of the past. But for Tyre the traveller can only inquire from the waves that beat upon the shore, from the rocks where the fishermen spread their nets. "Though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God."

IV. THE TEMPORARY AND DEPARTED SPLENDOURS OF EARTH SUGGEST BY CONTRAST ETERNAL AND UNFADING GLORY. Who can contemplate the ruin of such a city as Tyre without being reminded of "the city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God"? which the glory of God illumines with nightless splendour, and into which are brought the glory and honour of the nations?—T.

Vers. 1—6.—*Collision between man's plans and God's plans.* Appearance is never a safe guide. It might seem to a carnal eye as if the downfall of Israel would bring worldly advantage to Tyre. But that prospect was soon overcast. Righteous obedience is the only safe guide to men. The path may be, for a time, rough and dark, yet it will bring us into a paradise of light.

I. NATIONAL SELFISHNESS IS SIN. Nations have their vices as well as individual persons. If the leaders of a nation cherish evil purposes or pursue evil plans, unchecked by the subjects of the realm, the whole nation contracts guilt. Yet if one person or more, moved by better feelings, discountenances the national deed, that person is exculpated from the common blame, and shall be owned by God. The protection of Noah and his family, of Lot and his daughters, amid the general destruction, proves the fatherly care of God for individuals. The single grain in a heap of chaff shall be cared for by God.

II. AN OFFENCE DONE TO A NATION IS AN OFFENCE AGAINST GOD. Tyre had rejoiced in Jerusalem's overthrow. Instead of lamenting Israel's sins, the people of Tyre had room only for one thought—their own selfish advantage. The trade of Jerusalem would flow to Tyre. This calamity in Israel would bring a talent or two of gold into the pockets of Tyrian traders. What base ground for jubilation! No matter what suffering or humiliation the Jews may endure, Tyre would add to the smart by taunt and triumph. But God is not deaf. Into his ears every sound of selfish boasting came. He weighs every thought and word of man in his balances of justice. That selfish

taunt will not float idly on the summer gale. It is a grief to Jehovah, and he will repay. "The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for *all* that are oppressed." In all human affairs, individual or national, God has a real interest. He will never be left out of the account.

III. SELFISH PLANS ARE DOOMED TO REVERSE. Tyre had said, "I shall be replenished." God said, "I will make her like the top of a rock." Tyre had "reckoned without her host." Instead of security, she was to be inundated with invasion. Instead of wealth, there should be want. Instead of glory, desolation. Her selfish hope should burst like a bubble. The golden eggs she expected soon to be hatched proved to be the eggs of a cockatrice. Selfish greed is a bad investment. The desire to promote *our* national interests, to the injury of another nation, is not patriotism; it is selfish envy and pride. Triumph over another's fall is base, is diabolic.

IV. SECULAR LOSSES OFTEN BRING REAL GAIN. "They shall know that I am the Lord." This is a gain of the noblest kind—a gain that is abiding and permanent. Such knowledge is better than rubies. The bulk of men will not learn this lesson in the day of prosperity, but in the cloudy days of adversity, when all earthly good has vanished, the lesson stands out clearly before their eyes. Some earthly sciences are best learnt in the dark. This knowledge of God is best learnt in the dark hour of affliction. For when all human calculations have failed, and all human plans have collapsed, men are compelled to feel that an unseen hand has been working, an unseen Being has been presiding in their affairs. Of a truth, "the Lord reigneth."—D.

Vers. 7—14.—*A miracle of foreknowledge.* False prophets discourse only in general terms and in ambiguous language. Their announcements may have the most contrary meanings. At best they are happy conjectures, fortunate guesses. But the prophecies of Scripture are like sunlight compared with such a phosphorescent flame. The clearness and fulness of these prophetic utterances can be accounted for only as a revelation from the omniscient God.

I. DIVINE PREDICTIONS ARE ALWAYS RIGHTEOUS IN THEIR SUBSTANCE. The predictions of pretentious men are usually trivial—the effect of a prurient curiosity. God's revelations of the future are always concerned in the rebuke of sin and in the furtherance of righteousness. As in the manufacture of cordage in our Government arsenals a worsted thread of a distinct colour runs through every yard of rope, so through all God's dealings with men this principle of righteousness is ever prominent. What does not serve a righteous end is not of God.

II. DIVINE PREDICTIONS ARE CLEAR IN THEIR ANNOUNCEMENTS. There is no ambiguity, no double meaning, here. No one is left in doubt whether the event to happen is to be favourable or unfavourable. No one is left in doubt what place or people is the subject-matter of the prophecy. In this case every circumstance is narrated with as much minuteness of detail as if it were a piece of history acted before the eye of the speaker. The place to be overthrown, its peculiar situation and structure, its former greatness and splendour, the name of the invader, all his military enginery and tactics, the steps by which he should proceed, and the extent of his triumph, are announced beforehand with a clearness and definiteness that can only come from a superhuman source. The contents of the prophecy are often so unlikely in themselves that no human foresight, however shrewd, would conceive such issues; and the fulfilment of such improbable predictions most plainly indicate the operation of a Divine mind.

III. DIVINE PREDICTIONS ARE CERTAIN IN THEIR FULFILMENT. "I the Lord have spoken it, saith the Lord." The true prophet of Jehovah is modest and self-oblivious. He does not speak in his own name. He keeps himself in the background. His object is to exalt his Master and to gain homage for him. The predictions of God always take effect. For with God there is no future. He sees things distant as though they were near. Looking along the vista of ages, he perceives how every event unfolds from preceding event. The history of men and of nations is, to his eye, drawn out in long perspective. And his word is the mightiest force in the universe. "He spake, and it was done;" "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made;" "By the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked."

IV. DIVINE PREDICTIONS ARE MERCIFUL IN THEIR INTENTIONS. Wherefore did God

declare beforehand this coming suffering and disaster? Was it not enough to endure the calamity when the destined hour came? As the main design was to promote righteousness, this shall be done, if possible, in a way of mercy. The prediction would serve to instruct and console the Jews in captivity. It would be beneficial for them to be convinced that Jehovah ruled in all the affairs of men. If the prophecy reached the ears of the King of Babylon, it would serve a good purpose for him to know that he was a servant of the King of heaven, that his army was under the control of God, and that the success of his military expeditions depended on the good will of Jehovah. And if the prophecy should be repeated in the ears of the Tyrians, who can tell that some among them may repent and opportunely escape from the catastrophe? To foreshadow the dread event is an act of kindness, which the humble and teachable would appreciate.—D.

Vers. 15—21.—*National disaster becomes a public lesson.* The world of men is one, although nationalities are many. There is a thread of unity on which the separate jewels of humanity are strung. What affects *one* affects, in some measure, the whole.

I. THERE IS MUTUAL INTERDEPENDENCE OF NATIONS. Nations, like individuals, have been incarnations of selfishness. They have tried to aggrandize for self alone, but they have failed, and in most cases the failure has been a disaster. In respect to material property obtained through commerce, it is emphatically true that the prosperity *must* be shared by others. God will not allow any nation to retain every particle of its riches within itself. To be most prosperous, it must make others partakers of its wealth. The real welfare of one nation may be the welfare of all. Stable prosperity is diffusive.

II. MATERIAL PROSPERITY IS POWER. It brings position, honour, and extensive influence. The isles and lands with which Tyre traded held her in high repute. Many of the traders in other parts grew rich, gained powerful influence, became in their circles princes, and sat upon thrones. It is power, less potent than knowledge—power of an inferior sort—yet it is a perceptible power. It gives leisure for investigation and discovery. It can purchase stores of good. It can be converted into various forms of utility.

III. MATERIAL PROSPERITY IS VERY INSECURE. It often awakens the envy and the cupidity of others. It germinates pride in its possessor, and not pride only, but also arrogance and oppressiveness. In the natural course of things reaction appears. The oppressed classes combine and rise. Offence given to another nation in a spirit of overbearing arrogance awakens resentment, provokes vengeance. The wealthy nation is over-confident in its security and in its natural defences. But a little shrewdness or contrivance undermines every natural defence, or else confidence in men disappoints, and in an hour the fancied security is dissipated.

IV. THE FALL OF ONE NATION IS A GRIEF TO MANY NATIONS. "They shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say, How art thou destroyed, that wast inhabited of seafaring men, the renowned city!" Some selfish peoples would rejoice that a rival and a menace was overthrown. But others would be plunged into profound grief. Their traffic would be diminished, perhaps destroyed. Still worse, if Tyre, so mighty, so well-defended, be overthrown, what security have we? The downfall of Tyre shook the foundations of other empires, shook the hearts of many thoughtful men. It was evident that every kind of material defence was a broken reed.

V. TRUE LIFE IS THE ONLY TRUE GLORY. "I shall set glory in the land of the living." The only permanent life is a righteous life. Other life is ephemeral. This abides, this is eternal. Righteousness not only "exalts a nation," it consolidates and establishes it also. The "land of the living" is the empire of righteousness—the true holy land. The kingdom which is built on righteous principles is the kingdom of Christ. Every other kingdom has wood and hay and stubble intermixed with the gold and silver of sterling goodness. So far as righteous life prevails in any land on earth, so far will true and permanent glory abide there. All other foundations, all other defence, can and will *be shaken.*—D.

Vers. 1—21.—*The sin and doom of Tyre.* "And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first day of the month, that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying," etc.

I. THE SIN OF TYRE. "Son of man, because that Tyre hath said against Jerusalem, Aha! she is broken that was the gate of the peoples; she is turned unto me: I shall be replenished, now that she is laid waste." The sin which is here charged against Tyre is extreme and cruel selfishness. There is no evidence in this chapter that the Tyrians were animated by any hostile feelings towards the Jews, as the Ammonites, Edomites, and Philistines were. But Tyre was a great and prosperous commercial city, and the inhabitants thereof rejoiced in the destruction of Jerusalem because they thought that they should profit thereby. This is made quite clear in the verse before us. The Tyrians are represented as speaking of Jerusalem as "she that was the gate of the peoples." The plural expresses the fact, says the 'Speaker's Commentary,' "that many peoples passed through Jerusalem as the central place on the highway of commerce. This was eminently the case in the reign of Solomon, when for the time Jerusalem became the mart to which was gathered the trade of India and of the far East. The fame of its early greatness as the emporium of Eastern commerce still clung to Jerusalem, and this city, even in decadence, kept up enough of its original trade to be viewed with jealousy by Tyre, who owed her greatness to the same cause, and in the true spirit of mercantile competition exulted in the thought that the trade of Jerusalem would now be diverted into her markets." Their greed of gain had rendered them unfeeling and even cruel in their attitude towards their suffering neighbours, with whom in former times they had been in friendly relations. They rejoiced at the calamity of others because they believed it would contribute to their prosperity. They exulted in the downfall of others if it was likely to promote their own rise. This spirit is unbrotherly, selfish, mean, cruel. It is utterly opposed to the Divine will, and awakens the stern displeasure of the Almighty. Here is solemn admonition to persons, companies, societies, and nations, who would secure prosperity without regarding the means which they employ to do so. Are there not many to-day who care not who is impoverished if only they are enriched, who suffers if only they succeed, or who sinks provided that they rise? However their spirit may be tolerated or even approved by men, it is abhorrent unto God.

II. THE JUDGMENT OF GOD. 1. *Its Author.* "Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up." God himself in his providence brought upon Tyre the punishment of her extreme selfishness and cruel boastings against fallen Jerusalem. Ill fares it with any city which has the Lord against it. 2. *Its instruments.* "I will cause many nations to come up against thee . . . I will bring upon Tyre Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon," etc. (ver. 7). Nebuchadnezzar had conquered many kingdoms. He was a "king of kings," and the army which he led against Tyre was recruited from "many nations." He was the first instrument employed by God to punish Tyre for her sin. And ages afterwards, Alexander and his forces inflicted terrible sufferings and losses upon the people of the proud city. 3. *Its nature.* Several features of the punishment of Tyre are exhibited by the prophet. (1) Siege. "They shall destroy the walls of Tyre, and break down her towers . . . and he shall make forts against thee," etc. (vers. 8—10). Nebuchadnezzar besieged insular Tyre for thirteen years. Very great must have been the miseries of the people during those weary years. (2) Spoliation. "She shall become a spoil of the nations . . . and they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise," etc. (ver. 12). The riches in which they had prided themselves, and in the hope of the increase of which they had exulted in the downfall of Jerusalem, would be seized and possessed by others. The beautiful houses of their merchant-princes would be destroyed and their city ruined. (3) Slaughter. "Her daughters which are in the field shall be slain with the sword . . . he shall slay thy people with the sword." The daughters in the field are the cities on the mainland which were dependent on Tyre, or submitted to her supremacy, with special reference, perhaps, to Palætyrus, or Old Tyre, "the suburb of the insular Tyre, standing on the shore." We are not aware of any record of the extent of the slaughter by Nebuchadnezzar and his army. Probably it was very great. When Alexander besieged Tyre, fearful was the slaughter of the inhabitants thereof. "Besides eight thousand men slain in the attack, two thousand were crucified after the city was taken" (Kitto). (4) Complete and irretrievable overthrow. "They shall destroy the walls of Tyre, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and

make her a bare rock," etc. (vers. 4, 5, 14, 19—21). This part of the prophecy was not fully accomplished until centuries had passed away. Nebuchadnezzar, as we have said, besieged Tyre for thirteen years. He would be able soon to take Palætyrus, on the mainland, which was dismantled, if not entirely destroyed, by him. Whether at the end of the thirteen years he took the island-city is uncertain. The suggestions of the 'Speaker's Commentary' on the point seem to us very probably correct: "Nebuchadnezzar was indeed determined not to leave this city, once the vassal of the Assyrian, independent, and persevered until Tyre gave in. Nebuchadnezzar may then have insisted upon his right, as a conqueror, of entering the island-city with his army; but the conquest was probably barren of the fruits he had expected so far as spoil was concerned (cf. ch. xxix. 18), and Nebuchadnezzar, having asserted his majesty by reducing the city to vassalage, may have been content not to push matters further, and have willingly turned his forces in another direction." More than two centuries later, Alexander besieged Tyre. At that time the city "was completely surrounded by prodigious walls, the loftiest portion of which, on the side fronting the mainland, reached a height of not less than a hundred and fifty feet." The island on which it was built was nearly half a mile from the mainland. And as Alexander had no fleet, its situation made his task a difficult one. The difficulty was thus overcome: The harbour of Tyre to the north being "blockaded by the Cyprians, and that to the south by the Phœnicians," afforded Alexander an opportunity for constructing the enormous mole, or breakwater, which joined the island to the mainland. This mole was two hundred feet wide, and was composed of the ruins of Palætyrus, the stones and the timber and the dust of which were thus laid in the midst of the waters (ver. 12). Across the mole Alexander marched his forces, and soon made himself master of insular Tyre. Having done so, in addition to the ten thousand who were slain, thirty thousand of the inhabitants, including slaves, free women, and free children, were sold for slaves. But even after the Chaldean invasion under Nebuchadnezzar, Tyre "never regained independence, but was great and wealthy under Persian, Greek, and Roman masters. . . . It was never again a world-power, capable of raising itself again in its own might against the kingdom of God. In the present condition of Tyre we note the fulfilment of Ezekiel's predictions. In A.D. 638 it formed part of the conquests of Khalif Omar, who, however, dealt leniently with the inhabitants, and the city for many years enjoyed a moderate degree of prosperity. The ruin of Tyre was due to the Sultan of Egypt, who, in the year A.D. 1291, took possession, the inhabitants (who were Christians) having abandoned it without a struggle. The Saracens thereupon laid it in ruins, and did not allow the former inhabitants to return. In the first half of the fourteenth century it was visited by Sir John Mandeville, who found it in that state of desolation in which it has remained ever since" ('Speaker's Commentary'). Of modern travellers we quote the testimony of M. Rénan as to its present state: "No great city which has played so important a part for centuries has left fewer traces than Tyre. Ezekiel was a true prophet when he said of Tyre, 'They shall seek for thee, and thou shalt be no more' (ch. xxvi. 21). A traveller who was not informed of its existence might pass along the whole coast, from La Kasmie to Ras-el-Ain, without being aware that he was close to an ancient city. . . . Tyre is now the ruin of a town built with ruins."

III. THE LAMENTATION FOR TYRE. (Vers. 15—18.) 1. *The deep and widespread impression made by her destruction.* "Thus saith the Lord God to Tyre; Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall," etc.? (ver. 15). The coasts and islands of the Mediterranean are represented as shaking at the fall of the proud city, because her fall would denote the instability of all things. When Tyre is overthrown, what place can be deemed secure? 2. *The consternation produced by her destruction.* "Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones," etc. (ver. 16). By "the princes of the sea," we should probably understand the chief men in "the settlements of the Phœnicians in the Sidonian and Tyrian period along the various coasts, in Cyprus, Rhodes, Malta; in Spain, Sicily, Sardinia," etc. These are represented as changing their splendid robes for the garb of mourners, as coming down from their exalted and luxurious seats and sitting upon the ground. Persons in great affliction or sorrow are frequently represented as seated or prostrate upon the ground (cf. Job ii. 8, 13; Isa. iii. 26; xlvii. 1; Lam. ii. 10). Shakespeare, in 'King John,' makes Constance say—

"My grief's so great,
That no supporter but the huge firm earth
Can hold it up: here I and sorrow sit;
Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it."

These great men, moreover, were seized with amazement and continual trembling. 3. *The lamentation awakened by her destruction.* "And they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed," etc.! Thus would the fall of the prosperous island-city be bewailed by neighbouring peoples.

CONCLUSION. Certain lessons stand out with impressive clearness and force. 1. *The insecurity of worldly greatness, glory, and power.* 2. *The heinousness of the sin of selfishness.* 3. *The evanescence of the prosperity which is attained without regard to the rights or interests of others.*—W. J.

Vers. 2—4.—*The exultation of the world over the Church.* "Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha! she is broken that was the gate of the peoples," etc. Tyre is viewed by the prophet, not merely in its literal aspect, but also in a typical one. "Tyre, in the prophets," says Schröder, "comes into consideration, not in a political respect, but as the representative, the might, of the world's commerce. Jehovah and mammon are the counterpart to Jerusalem and Tyre." And says Hengstenberg, "Along with Babylon and Egypt, Tyre was then the most glorious concentration of the worldly power. In the queen of the sea, the thought of the vanity of all worldly power was strikingly exemplified. Hand-in-hand with this thought goes, in Ezekiel, that of the indestructibleness of the kingdom of God." If, then, we take Tyre as representing the world with its riches and pomp and power, and Jerusalem the Church, the text gives us as a subject the exultation of the world over the Church. But it behoves us to be clear as to what we are to understand by the world—the world that is antagonistic to the Church. It is neither the material world, nor the human world—the world of men, nor our worldly or secular occupation. Very admirably has F. W. Robertson, on 1 John ii. 15—17, brought out the meaning of the world which is forbidden to Christians. "Now to define what worldliness is. Remark, first, that it is determined by the *spirit* of a life, not the objects with which the life is conversant. It is not the 'flesh,' nor the 'eye,' nor 'life,' which are forbidden, but it is the *lust* of the flesh, and the *lust* of the eye, and the *pride* of life. . . . Look into this a little closer. The lust of the flesh. Here is affection for the outward: pleasure, that which affects the senses only: the flesh, that enjoyment which comes from the emotions of an hour, be it coarse or be it refined. The pleasure of wine or the pleasure of music, so far as it is only a movement of the flesh. Again, the lust of the eye. Here is affection for the transient, for the eye can only gaze on form and colour; and these are things that do not last. Once more, the pride of life. Here is affection for the unreal—men's opinion, the estimate which depends upon wealth, rank, circumstances. Worldliness, then, consists in these three things—attachment to the outward, attachment to the transitory, attachment to the unreal, in opposition to love for the inward, the eternal, the true; and the one of these affections is necessarily expelled by the other." In this view of worldliness, Tyre was representative of the world. She gloried in her secure situation, her commercial prosperity, her great riches, etc. We remark that *the exultation of the world over the Church*—

I. IS BITTER AND BOASTFUL. "Tyre hath said against Jerusalem, Aha! she is broken that was the gate of the peoples," etc. (ver. 2). As we have already shown (in our homily on the chapter as a whole), this unseemly triumphing arose from the selfishness which anticipated that the fall of Jerusalem would promote the commercial prosperity of Tyre. But probably this was not the only reason for the rejoicing of the Tyrians in the ruin of the sacred city. The antagonism between their religion and the religion of the Jews would increase their joy at the downfall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. "Only thirty-four years before the destruction of Jerusalem," says Mr. Twisleton, "commenced the celebrated reformation of Josiah (B.C. 622). This momentous religious revolution (2 Kings xxii., xxiii.) fully explains the exultation and malevolence of the Tyrians. In that reformation Josiah had heaped insults on the gods who were the objects of Tyrian veneration and love; he had consumed with fire the sacred vessels used in their worship; he had burnt their images

and defiled their high places—not excepting even the high place near Jerusalem, which Solomon the friend of Hiram had built to Ashtoreth the queen of heaven, and which for more than three hundred and fifty years had been a striking memorial of the reciprocal good will which once united the two monarchs and the two nations. Indeed, he seemed to have endeavoured to exterminate their religion, for in Samaria (2 Kings xxiii. 20) he had slain upon the altars of the high places all their priests. These acts, although in their ultimate results they may have contributed powerfully to the diffusion of the Jewish religion, must have been regarded by the Tyrians as a series of sacrilegious and abominable outrages; and we can scarcely doubt that the death in battle of Josiah at Megiddo, and the subsequent destruction of the city and temple of Jerusalem, were hailed by them with triumphant joy as instances of Divine retribution in human affairs."[1] Moreover, it is very probable that some of the predictions of the Hebrew prophets concerning Tyre in its relation to Jerusalem were known to the people of the island-city, and increased the bitterness of their joy over the calamities of the Jews. "In the Messianic announcements, the homage of Tyre to Jerusalem, and its incorporation into the kingdom of God, were expressly celebrated" (see, as examples, Ps. xlv. 12; lxxxvii. 4; Isa. xxiii. 18). "Without doubt," says Hengstenberg, "these bold hopes of Zion were known in Tyre, and caused much bad blood in the proud queen of the sea." And still there are those who, worldly in spirit, are bitter against the Church of God. They deride its noblest enterprises; they ridicule its vital beliefs; they mock its most cherished hopes. If Christians are rigid and scrupulous in their religious duties and observances, the world reproaches them for their narrowness and Pharisaism. If Christians stumble and fall, the world rejoices in their overthrow and scoffs at their religion. But the exultation of the world over the Church—

II. IS VAIN. The things from which the world draws its satisfaction, and upon which it rests its hopes, are uncertain and delusive. Tyre rejoiced in her security, her riches, her commercial prosperity; but these things failed her in her time of need. That these things are unstable, impermanent, transient, is a truth which no one attempts to deny. How vain, then, to exult in the ascendancy which such things give! The world's triumph, even at the best, is more in appearance than reality. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof." But the essential elements of the Church's life are real and abiding verities. The Church may be brought down very low, but it shall rise again. Its course leads on to splendid triumph. But the ungodly world shall sink. Its rank and riches, its pomp and power and pleasures shall pass away as the dreams of night fade before the light and the activities of day.

III. IS OBSERVED BY THE LORD GOD. He knew and took notice of the cruel triumph of proud Tyre over prostrate Jerusalem. He made known the fact of that triumph to his servant Ezekiel on the banks of the Chebar. He still observes the attitude of the world towards his Church. No persons or powers can exalt themselves against his people without attracting the notice of his ever-watchful eye (cf. 2 Chron. xvi. 9; Ps. xxxiv. 15, 16; 1 Pet. iii. 12, 13).

IV. WILL BE PUNISHED BY THE LORD GOD. "Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyre," etc. (vers. 3, 4). The Lord here proclaims himself against Tyre, and threatens to strip the proud city of her boasted pomp, prosperity, and power. He would break down her defences, level her to the ground, make an utter end of her, leaving nothing but the bare rock on which she had stood. The defences of the irreligious world are subtle policies, material riches, social power, etc. These are all impermanent things. And should they endure, the time comes when they will fail to meet the needs of those who put their trust in them. If no other punishment awaited the votaries of this world, surely this would be a heart-crushing, a heart-breaking one, to awake to the sad realization of the stern truth that the objects for which they had striven in life, which they had looked upon as their chief good, and in which they had trusted, were vain, having no power or fitness to answer the deep cravings of their souls, or to help them in the awful needs of their being. "Whose confidence shall break in sunder, and whose trust is a spider's web;" "And their hope shall be the giving up of the ghost."—W. J.

Vers. 15—18.—*A lamentation over fallen greatness.* "Thus saith the Lord God to

[1] Dr. Smith's 'Bibl. Dictionary,' art. "Tyre."

Tyrus; Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall," etc.? These verses suggest the following observations.

I. THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD ARE SOMETIMES SO AWFUL AS TO FILL THE EXALTED AND MIGHTY WITH AMAZEMENT AND DISMAY. (Vers. 15, 16; cf. Jer. iv. 7—9.) The isles are the islands of the Mediterranean, and places on the coast also are perhaps referred to. The princes are those of the various island and sea-board settlements, and the wealthy merchant-princes of prosperous commercial centres. Thus it was said of Tyre, "whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth" (Isa. xxiii. 8). The fall of Tyre would cause them extreme astonishment and trembling for their own safety. The Divine retributions sometimes appall even the stoutest hearts, and lead the highly placed and powerful to realize (at least for a time) their weakness.

II. THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD SOMETIMES AWAKEN THE LAMENTATIONS OF THOSE WHO BEHOLD THEM. "They shall take up a lamentation for thee," etc. (ver. 17). This verse seems to suggest that the fall of Tyre would be bewailed in mournful threnodies. It is instructive to notice what it was which the neighbouring states lamented in the downfall of the island-city. The things which are particularized in the text are such as these: the eclipse of brilliant renown, "How art thou destroyed . . . the renowned city!" the destruction of distinguished power, "which was strong in the sea;" the overthrow of one which had been so formidable to others, "which caused their terror to be on all that haunt it." Worldly minds mourn the loss of worldly prosperity. "When Jerusalem, the holy city, was destroyed," says Matthew Henry, "there were no such lamentations for it; it was nothing to those that passed by (Lam. i. 12); but when Tyre, the trading city, fell, it was universally bemoaned. Note: Those who have the world in their hearts lament the loss of great men more than the loss of good men." But the pious patriot and prophet Jeremiah bewailed the destruction of Jerusalem "in his unrivalled elegies." As Dr. Milman observes, "Never did city suffer a more miserable fate, never was ruined city lamented in language so exquisitely pathetic."

III. THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD SHOULD LEAD THOSE WHO BEHOLD THEM TO EXERCISE SERIOUS REFLECTION. Catastrophes like the fall of Tyre startle peoples and nations into short-lived concern or even alarm. They ought to lead to sober thought and earnest self-examination. They are fitted to impress salutary lessons and to direct to a salutary course of action. May we not say that they are designed to do so? "When God punishes, he does it not merely on account of the ungodly, who must feel such punishment, but also on account of other ungodly persons, that they may become better by such examples." This judgment upon Tyre was fitted to teach: 1. *The limitation of human greatness.* Unquestionably, Tyre was great; but she was not great enough to stand against the forces of Nebuchadnezzar, or, in after-times, against the might of Alexander. The greatest of human states is pitiably small when God arrays himself against it (cf. ver. 3). 2. *The uncertainty of secular prosperity.* Tyre was a rich and prosperous city; but where now are its riches, its great commerce, etc.? Fresh illustrations arise almost daily of the unreliableness of secular success, and the uncertain tenure of temporal possessions. "For riches certainly make themselves wings, like an eagle that flieth toward heaven." 3. *The insecurity of those who seem most firmly established.* The proud island-city seemed most securely founded and fortified. Her situation was a source of great strength and safety against any adversary. She was able to offer long and stubborn resistance to the powerful and victorious King of Babylon. But she was conquered; and now she is utterly demolished. The very strongest and most stable of cities or empires may slowly decline into insignificance and feebleness, or speedily reel into ruin. 4. *The ruinousness of sin.* The intense selfishness and cruel boasting of Tyre against Jerusalem led to her overthrow. No state or kingdom can be strong apart from righteousness. Vice, injustice, oppression, cruelty, will bring the mightiest city or empire to ruin. "The throne is established by righteousness;" "Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness;" "The king that faithfully judgeth the poor, his throne shall be established for ever." Lessons such as these the fall of Tyre should have impressed upon those who were affected by it. Others' miseries should be our monitors. When God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world should learn righteousness (Isa. xxvi. 9).—W. J.

Ver. 20.—*An encouraging assurance for a depressed people.* "And I shall set glory in the land of the living." Accepting this rendering as expressing the meaning of the original, and as applicable to Judah, we see in it—

I. A REMARKABLE DESIGNATION OF THE HOLY LAND. It is here called "the land of the living." Hengstenberg views "the land of the living" as standing in "contrast to Sheol, the land of the dead, to which in the foregoing the inhabitants of Tyre are assigned." The expression seems to refer particularly to Palestine. The 'Speaker's Commentary' says, "The land of the living is the land of the true God, as opposed to the land of the dead, to which is gathered the glory of the world." And Matthew Henry, "The holy land is the land of the living; for none but holy souls are properly living souls." There was propriety in applying this designation to that land, because there: 1. *The living God was known and worshipped.* "In Judah is God known: his Name is great in Israel," etc. (Ps. lxxvi. 1, 2); "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God," etc. (Ps. xlii. 2). The people of other lands had riches, honours, power; but they were idolaters. Their gods were no gods, but dead idols. In the highest sense no land can be called living whose deity or deities are dead, unreal, mere human inventions. To the people of Judah and Jerusalem the living and true God had revealed himself through law-giver, prophet, and poet, and through his hand in their history as a nation. 2. *The living Word was possessed.* The sacred writings of the Jews are far superior to those of heathen nations. They were true: "the Word of truth" (Ps. cxix. 43, 142, 160). They were vital and lasting: "living oracles" (Acts vii. 38); "the Word of God, which liveth and abideth" (1 Pet. i. 23). They were life-giving: "Thy Word hath quickened me" (Ps. cxix. 50, 93). Moreover, their Scriptures were light-giving: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. cxix. 105, 130). 3. *The living ordinances were observed.* The pure worship of the living and true God was instituted and practised there, and, after the return from the Captivity, without any admixture of idolatry. Worship, when it is directed to the true Object and offered in a true spirit, develops and strengthens the noblest life of the worshipper. To the pious Jews the means of grace were as "wells of salvation." In these respects, then, Palestine was appropriately called "the land of the living." And with even greater fulness and force may the designation be applied to this favoured land of ours.

II. AN ENCOURAGING ASSURANCE CONCERNING THE HOLY LAND. "I shall set glory in the land of the living." Let us look at this assurance: 1. *In its primary signification.* By the side of the utter overthrow of Tyre, Ezekiel predicts the renewal of the Divine favour and of prosperity to Jerusalem. Brief as the clause is, it indicates the return of the people of Judah from captivity to their own land, the rebuilding of the temple of Jehovah, the re-establishment of religious ordinances, and the restoration of the sacred city. And all these things were in due season accomplished. And thus interpreted, the assurance given in the text is the more significant from the fact that, after their return home, the Jews never obscured the Divine glory by the practice of idolatry. They neither gave God's glory to another nor his praise unto graven images. 2. *In its other and grander signification.* The text prophetically points to the coming of the Messiah and the proclamation of the glorious gospel. In the work of redemption by Jesus Christ we have a much more illustrious display of the glory of God than in the return of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the temple, etc. And this glory is ever increasing amongst men as the triumphs of the gospel are multiplied. The enemies of the cause of God are being vanquished by truth and love, and his true kingdom is constantly being established more and more deeply and widely in this world. And at length "all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord."

CONCLUSION. Even in the darkest seasons of its history there is always a bright and inspiring hope for the true Church of God. By its unfaithfulness it may bring upon itself severe chastisement from its great Head; but it shall arise from the dust purified and strengthened, and go forward in its glorious course, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners."—W. J.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Ver. 2.—Take up a lamentation for Tyrus. The dirge over the merchant-city that follows, the doom *sic transit gloria mundi*, worked out with a fulness of detail which reminds us of the Homeric catalogue of ships ('Iliad,' ii. 484—770), is almost, if not altogether, without a parallel in the history of literature. It can scarcely have rested on anything but personal knowledge. Ezekiel, we must believe, had, at some time or other in his life, trod the sinful streets of the great city, and noted the mingled crowd of many nations and in many costumes that he met there, just as we infer from Dante's vivid description of the dockyards of Venice ('Inf.,' xxi. 7—15) that he had visited that city. Apart from its poetic or prophetic interest, it is for us almost the *locus classicus* as to the geography and commerce of that old world of which Tyre was in some sense the centre. We may compare it, from that point of view, with the ethnological statements in Gen. x.; just as, from the standpoint of prophecy, it has to be compared with Isaiah's "burden" against Babylon (Isa. xiii., xiv.), and with St. John's representation of Rome as the spiritual Babylon of the Apocalypse (Rev. xviii.).

Ver. 3.—We begin with the picture of the city, situate at the entry (Hebrew, *entries*), or harbours of the sea. Of these Tyre had two—the northern, known as the Sidonian; the southern, as the Egyptian. There she dwelt, a merchant of the peoples, that came, in the wider sense of the word (see ch. xxvi. 15), from the isles of the Mediterranean. I am perfect in beauty. The boast here put into the mouth of the city appears afterwards as the utterance of its ruler, or as applied to him (ch. xxviii. 2, 15—17). We are reminded of Genoa, *la superba*.

Ver. 4.—In the midst of the seas; literally, *in the heart* (Revised Version). The words were true of the island-city, but Ezekiel has already present to his thoughts the idealized picture of the city under the figure of its stateliest ship. The builders are ship-builders, and in the verses that follow we have a picture of the Bucentaur of the Venice of the ancient world.

Ver. 5.—Fir trees of Senir. The name appears in Deut. iii. 9 and Song of Sol. iv. 8 as *Shenir*; in 1 Chron. v. 23 it is spelt as here. From Deut. iii. 9 we learn that it was the Amorite name for Hermon, as Sirion was the Sidonian name. In 1 Kings v. 10 Hiram King of Tyre appears as supplying Solomon with the fir and cedar timber mentioned here for the erection of his palace, the house of the forest of Lebanon (1 Kings vii. 2). The fir tree was more commonly used for ships, the cedar for houses (Virgil, 'Georg.,' ii. 444). The Hebrew for "boards" is unique in its form as a plural with a dual form superadded to indicate that each plank had its counterpart on the other side of the ship.

Ver. 6.—The high plateau of Bashan, the region east of the sea of Galilee and the Jordan, now known as the Hauran, was famous then, as it is now, for its oak forests and its wild cattle (Ps. xxii. 12). The company of the Ashurites, etc.; better, with the Revised Version, *they have made thy benches of ivory inlaid in boxwood*. The Authorized Version follows the present Hebrew text, but the name of the nation there is not the same as that of the Assyrians, and corresponds with the Ashurites of 2 Sam. ii. 9—an obscure tribe of Canaanites, possibly identical with the Geshurites. A difference of punctuation or spelling (*Bithasshurim* for *Bath-asshurim*) gives the meaning which the Revised Version follows; *thasshur* being used in Isa. xli. 19 and lx. 13 for the box tree, or perhaps cypress, or larch, as forming part of the glory of Lebanon. The use of ivory in ship or house building seems to have been one of the arts for which Tyre was famous. So we have the ivory palace of Ahab, after he had married his Sidonian queen (1 Kings xxii. 39) and those of the monarch who had married a Tyrian princess in Ps. xlv. 8 (see also Amos iii. 15). For the use of such inlaid wood in later times, see Virgil, 'Æneid,' x. 137. Either the ivory or the wood is said to come from the isles of Chittim. The word was about as wide in its use as the "Indies" in the time of Elizabeth. Josephus ('Ant.,' i. 6. 1) identifies it with Cyprus, which perhaps retains a memorial of it in Citium. The Vulgate, as in Numb. xxiv. 24, identifies it here with Italy, and in Dan. xi. 30 translates the "ships of Chittim" as *trieres et Romani*, while in 1 Macc. i. 1 it is used of Greece as including Macedonia. In Gen. x. 4 the Kittim appear as descended from Javan, *i.e.* are classed as Greeks or Ionians. The ivory which the Tyrians used probably came from Northern Africa, and may have been supplied through Carthage or other Phœnician colonies. A supply may have come also from Ethiopia through Egypt, or from the Red Sea ports, with which the Phœnicians carried on a trade with Arabia. Inlaid ivory-work, sometimes in wood, sometimes with enamel, is found both in

Egyptian and Assyrian remains ('Dict. Bible,' *s.v.* "Ivory").

Ver. 7.—**For the fine linen of Egypt, the byssus** famous in its commerce, see Gen. xli. 42; Exod. xxvi. 36. **This, which took the place of the coarse canvas of the common ships, was made more magnificent** by being embroidered with purple or crimson, with gold borders. The ship of Antony and Cleopatra had purple sails, which, as they swelled out with the wind, served as a banner. The ancient ships had no flags or pennons. So the Revised Version renders, *of fine linen . . . was thy sail, that it might be to thee for an ensign.* The word for "sail" in the Authorized Version is rendered "banner" in Ps. lx. 4; Isa. xiii. 2, and "ensign" in Isa. xi. 12. **The isles of Elishah.** The name appears in Gen. x. 4 as one of the sons of Javan. It has been identified, on the ground chiefly of similarity of sound, with Elis, Hellas, or Æolia. Laconia has been suggested as being famous for the murex which supplied the purple dye. The Targum gives Italy. Sicily also has been conjectured. The murex is common all over the Mediterranean, but Cythera and Abydos are named as having been specially famous for it. Probably, as in the case of "Chittim," the word was used with considerable latitude. The latter clause of the verse describes the awning over the deck of the queenly ship. Was Ezekiel describing what he had actually seen in the state-ship of Tyre?

Ver. 8.—The two cities are named as tributaries of Tyre from which she drew her sailors, the Tyrians themselves acting as captains and pilots. **Zidon** (now *Saida*) is named in Gen. x. 15 as the firstborn of Canaan, and was older than Tyre itself (Isa. xxiii. 2, 12). **Arvad** is identified with the Greek Aradus, the modern *Ruad*, an island about two miles from the coast, about two miles north of the mouth of the river Eleutheros (*Nahr-el-Kebir*). It is scarcely a mile in circumference, but was prominent enough to be named here and in Gen. x. 18; 1 Chron. i. 16. Opposite to it on the mainland was the town of Antaradus. **For mariners,** the Revised Version gives *rowers.*

Ver. 9.—**The ancients of Gebal.** The word is used in the sense of "elders" or "senators," the governing body. Gebal, for which the LXX. gives *Biblii,* is identified with the Greek Byblus. The name appears in Ps. lxxxiii. 7 in connection, among other nations, with Tyre and Asshur, as allied with them against Israel; in Josh. xiii. 5 as near Lebanon and Hermon; in 1 Kings v. 18 (margin Revised Version) as among the stonemasons who worked with Hiram's builders. Byblus was situated on an eminence overlooking the river Adonis between Beirut and Tripoli. Its modern name, *Gebail,* retains the old Semitic form, and its ruins abound in marble and granite columns of Phœnician and Egyptian workmanship. **The work of the caulkers** was to stop the chinks of the ship, and the men of Gebal appear to have been specially skilful in this. We note that the metaphor of the ship falls into the background in the latter clause of the verse, and does not appear again.

Ver. 10.—**Persia.** The name does not meet us in any Old Testament book before the exile, Elam taking its place. It was just about the time that Ezekiel wrote that the Persians were becoming conspicuous through their alliance with the Medes. So we find it again in ch. xxxviii. 5; Dan. v. 28; viii. 20; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 20, 22; Ezra i. 1; iv. 5; Esth. i. 3. Here they are named as mercenaries in the Tyrian army. **Lud.** The LXX. and the Vulgate, led by the similarity of sound, give *Lydians.* In Gen. x. 13 the Ludim appear as descendants of Mizraim, while Lud in Gen. x. 22 is joined with Elam and Asshur as among the sons of Shem. Its combination with "Phut" (*i.e.* Libya) here and in Jer. xlvi. 9 is in favour of its referring to an African nation (comp. also ch. xxx. 5; Isa. lxvi. 19). **Phut.** Both the LXX. and the Vulgate give *Libyans.* In Gen. x. 6 the name is joined with Cush and Mizraim. The Lubim (Libyans) are named as forming part of Shishak's army in 2 Chron. xii. 3; xvi. 8, and in Nah. iii. 9 and Jer. xlvi. 9 as closely allied with the Egyptians. Ezekiel names Phut again as sharing in the fall of Tyre (ch. xxx. 5), and as serving in the army of Gog (ch. xxxviii. 5). Mr. R. S. Poole is inclined to identify them with the Nubians.

Ver. 11.—(**For Arvad,** see ver. 8.) **Gammadim.** The LXX. translates "guards" (φύλακες); the Vulgate, *Pygmies,* probably as connecting the name with *Gamad* (equivalent to "a cubit"). The Targum gives "watchmen;" Gesenius, "warriors;" Hitzig, "deserters." The name probably indicates that they were the flower of the Tyrian army—the life-guards (like the "Immortals" of the Persians) of the merchant-city. On the whole, we must leave the problem as one that we have no data for solving. The grouping with Arvad, however, suggests a Syrian or Phœnician tribe. **They hanged their shields.** The custom seems to have been specially Phœnician. Solomon introduced it at Jerusalem (Song of Sol. iv. 4). The sight of the walls thus decorated, the shields being sometimes gilt or painted, must have been sufficiently striking to warrant Ezekiel's phrase that thus the beauty of the city was "made

perfect" by it. The custom reappears in 1 Macc. iv. 57.

Ver. 12.—**Tarshish.** The description of the city is followed by a *catalogue raisonnée* of the countries with which she traded. Here we are on more certain ground, there being a general consensus that Tarshish, the Greek Tartessus, indicates the coast of Spain, which was pre-eminent in the ancient world for the metals named (Jer. x. 9). The ships of Tarshish (1 Kings xxii. 48; Isa. ii. 16) were the larger merchant-vessels that were made for this distant traffic. Like all such names, it was probably used with considerable latitude, and it is worth noting that both the LXX. and the Vulgate give *Carthaginians*. Probably the chief Phœnician colonies in Spain, notably, of course, Carthago Nova, were offshoots from Carthage, in which, by the way, we trace the old Hebrew *Kirjath* (equivalent to "city"). **Traded in thy fairs**; better, with the Revised Version, *traded for thy wares*; i.e. they bartered their mineral treasures for the goods brought by the Tyrian merchants. The same Hebrew word appears in vers. 14, 16, 19, 22, 23, but is not found elsewhere in the Old Testament, and may have been a technical word in Tyrian commerce. The LXX. gives *ἀγορά*; the Vulgate, *nundinæ*, which seems to have suggested the Revised Version.

Ver. 13.—**Javan** (father of Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim, and son of Japheth, Gen. x. 2, 4) stands generically for Greece, and probably represents Ionia. **Tubal and Meshech** are sons of Japheth in Gen. x. 2, and are always grouped together, except in Ps. cxx. 5, where Meshech appears alone, and in Isa. lxvi. 19, where Tubal is named, but not Meshech. In ch. xxxii. 26 they are associated with Elam and Asshur (Assyria); in ch. xxxviii. 2, 3 and xxxix. 1 with Gog. The two names probably represented the tribes on the south-east coast of the Black Sea. Here the chief traffic was in slaves, the Tyrian traders probably buying them in exchange for their manufactured goods, and selling them to the cities of Greece as well as Phœnicia. In Greek history the names appear as Tibareni and Moschi (Herod., iii. 94; Xenophon, 'Anab.,' v. 5. 2, *et al.*). In Joel iv. 6 Tyrians are represented as selling Israelites as slaves in Greek cities (Hebrew "sons of Javan"). Thrace and Scythia were at all times the chief countries from which Greece imported her slaves. **Vessels of brass.** Here, as throughout the Old Testament, we should read "copper," the mixed metal which we know as "brass" not being known to ancient metallurgy. Copper-mines were found near the Caucasus, and Eubœa was also famous for them. The region was also noted for its iron.

Ver. 14.—**Togarmah.** The name appears in ch. xxxviii. 6 as an ally of Gog, in Gen. x. 3 as a son of Gomer. Jerome identifies it with Phrygia, others with Cappadocia, but there is a wider consensus for Armenia, which was famous for its horses and mules (Xenophon, 'Anab.,' 5. 34; Strabo, xi. 14. 9; Herod., i. 194).

Ver. 15.—**The men of Dedan.** The name occurs again in ver. 20, and has already met us in ch. xxv. 13 (where see note). Here the words probably refer to the many isles of the Persian Gulf or the Red Sea. So the ships of Solomon and Hiram—ships of Tarshish (name used generically for merchant-vessels)—brought ivory among their other imports, starting from Ezion-Geber (1 Kings ix. 26; x. 22). Ebony came from Ethiopia and India. Virgil, indeed, names the latter country as the only region which produced it ('Georg.,' ii. 115). Ceylon is at present one of the chief sources of supply. The LXX. curiously enough gives *Rhodians*, the Hebrew letters for *d* and *r* being easily mistaken by copyists.

Ver. 16.—**Syria**; Hebrew, *Aram*. The LXX. which gives *ἀνθρώπους*, seems to have read *Adam* (equivalent to "man"), another instance of the fact just referred to. And this has led many commentators (Michaelis, Ewald, Hitzig, Fürst) to conjecture, following the Peshito Version, that *Edom* must have been the true reading. As regards the products named, we know too little of the commerce of Edom to say whether it included them in its exports, and the fact that the **broidered work** of Babylon had been famous from of old (Josh. vii. 21), and that it was also the oldest emporium for precious stones, may be urged in favour of the present reading, and of taking Aram in its widest sense as including Mesopotamia. On the other hand, the mention of onyx, sapphire, coral, pearls, topaz, in Job xxviii. 16—19, the local colouring of which is essentially Idumæan, supports the conjectural emendation. **Emeralds** (comp. Exod. xxviii. 18). Some writers identify it with the carbuncle. It meets us again in ch. xxviii. 13. The **fine linen** (*butz*) is different from that of ver. 7 (*shesh*), and appears only in the later books of the Old Testament (1 Chron. iv. 21; 2 Chron. iii. 14; Esth. i. 6, *et al.*). It was probably the *byssus* of the Greeks, made of cotton, while the Egyptian fabric was of flax. **Coral.** The Hebrew (*ramoth*) occurs only here and in Job xxviii. 18. "Coral" is the traditional Jewish interpretation, but the LXX. transliterates, and the Vulgate gives *sericum*. **Agate** is found here and in Isa. liv. 12, and has been identified with the ruby or carbuncle. In Exod. xxviii. 19 and xxxix. 12 the English represents a different Hebrew word.

Ver. 17.—**Judah and the land of Israel.** The narrow strip of land occupied by the Phœnicians was unable to supply its crowded population. It was dependent on Israel for its corn and oil and the like in the days of Solomon (1 Kings v. 9—11) and continued to be so to those of Herod Agrippa (Acts xii. 20). **Minnith** appears in Judg. xi. 33 as a city of the Ammonites near Heshbon, and the region of Ammon was famous for its wheat (2 Chron. xxvii. 5). Minnith wheat probably fetched the highest price in the Tyrian markets. **Pannag** is found here only. The versions, Targum, LXX., give "ointments" (*μύροι*), Vulgate, *balsam*. Most modern commentators take it as meaning sweetmeats, the syrup of grape-juice, possibly something like the modern rahat-la-koum of Turkish commerce. Possibly, like Minnith, it may have been a proper name the significance of which is lost to us. **Honey** was at all times one of the famous products of Palestine (Judg. xiv. 8; 1 Sam. xiv. 27; Ps. xix. 10; Exod. xxxiii. 3).

Ver. 18.—**Damascus.** The chief export of the great capital of Syria was the wine of of Helbon. The name occurs only here in the Old Testament. The LXX. gives *Chelbon;* the Vulgate, as if it described the quality of the wine, *vinum pingue*. It has been identified with Aleppo and with Chalybon, but both of these places are too remote from Damascus, and Mr. J. R. Porter ('Dict. Bible,' s.v.) finds it in a place a few miles from Damascus, still bearing the name, and famous as producing the finest grapes in Syria. Strabo (ch. xv. p. 735) names the wine of Chalybon as the favourite drink of the Persian kings, and Athenæus (i. 22) says the same of the wine of Damascus. The name appears in Egyptian monuments in conjunction with Kedes, as a Hittite city, and Brugsch ('Geogr. Ægypt.,' ii. 45) agrees with Porter as to its position. **White wool.** The adjective has been taken as a proper name (Smend) "wool of Zachar," the region being identified with Nabathæa, which was famous for its sheep. The LXX. gives "wool of Miletus," the city most famous in Greek commerce for its woollen fabrics.

Ver. 19.—**Dan also**; Hebrew, *Vedan*. The Authorized Version, following the Vulgate, takes the first syllable as the common conjunction "and;" but no other verse in the chapter begins in this way, and the Revised Version is probably right in giving the Hebrew word as its stands. Dan, it may be added, was hardly likely to have been singled out of all the tribes after the mention of Judah and Israel, especially as it had shared in the exile of the ten tribes. Smend identifies it with *Waddan*, between Mecca and Medina, or with Aden. Javan, too, already named in ver. 13, can scarcely here be Greece, though it may possibly refer to Greek traders. It also has been identified conjecturally with an Arabian city. The words, **going to and fro**, have been rendered "from Uzal" (Gen. x. 27), the ancient name of the capital of Yemen, in Arabia; or, as in the Revised Version, *with yarn*. The **bright iron** describes the steel used for sword-blades, for which Yemen was famous. **Cassia** (Exod. xxx. 24; Ps. xlv. 8) and **calamus** (Exod. xxx. 23; Song of Sol. iv. 14) both belong to the class of perfumes for which Arabia was famous. It is probably the *Acorus fragrans*, the "sweet cane" of Isa. xliii. 24; Jer. vi. 20.

Ver. 20.—**Dedan** (see ver. 15). Here probably we have another portion of the same race. **The precious clothes for riding** (Revised Version) were probably of the nature of the carpets used then as now as saddle-cloths—the *ephippia* of the Greeks—in Persia and other parts of Asia. Compare "ye that sit on rich carpets," in Judg. v. 10 (Revised Version). So the Vulgate, *tapetibus ad sedendum*. The LXX. gives *κτήνη ἐκλεκτα*, as though it referred to horses.

Ver. 21.—**Arabia.** The word, commonly in connection with Dedan, is used in the limited sense which attaches to it in the Old Testament (2 Chron. ix. 14; Isa. xxi. 13; Jer. xxv. 24) for the tribes of what in Greek and Roman geography were known as Arabia Deserta. **Kedar.** The name (equivalent to "black-skinned") appears as that of the second son of Ishmael (Gen. xxv. 13). The black tents of Kedar (Ps. cxx. 5; Song of Sol. i. 5) indicate a nomadic tribe of the Bedouin type, famous, as in Isa. lx. 7 and Jer. xlix. 28, 29, for their flocks of sheep and camels. They appear, also, as having cities and villages in Isa. xlii. 11. The name is used in later rabbinic writings for all the inhabitants of Arabia.

Ver. 22.—**Sheba.** The *Sabæa* of the Greeks. It is applied, in Gen. x. 7 and 1 Chron. i. 9, to a grandson of Cush; in Gen. x. 28 and 1 Chron. i. 22, to a son of Joktan; and in Gen. xxv. 3 and 1 Chron. i. 32, to a grandson of Abraham. Geographically, in Ezekiel's time it probably included the South-Arabian region, that of Yemen, or Arabia Felix, and was famous, as in the history of the Queen of Sheba, for its gold, gems, and spices (1 Kings x. 1, 2; Ps. lxxii. 10, 15). **Raamah.** Named in Gen. x. 7 as father of the Cushite Sheba, and probably, therefore, connected with it ethnologically and geographically. **The chief of all spices** had probably a technical name, like the "principal spices" of Exod xxx. 23 and Song of Sol. iv. 14 for the genuine balsam, the product of the *Amyris opobalsamum*, which is found between

Mecca and Medina. The precious stones includes onyx, rubies, agates, and cornelians found in the mountains of Hadramaut, and the jaspers and crystals of Yemen. In the Rhammanitæ, mentioned by Strabo as a Sabæan tribe (xvi. 782), we have, perhaps, a survival of the old name.

Ver. 23.—**Haran and Canneh**, etc. From Arabia we pass to Mesopotamia. Haran (Gen. xi. 31) stands for the Carrhæ of the Romans, situated at the point where the old military and commercial roads bifurcated towards Babylon and the Delta of the Persian Gulf in the one direction, and Canaan in the other. It appears in Gen. xxiv. 10 and xxix. 4 as the city of Nahor, in Mesopotamia (Aram-Naharaim, equivalent to "Syria of the two rivers"), or, more definitely, in Padan-Aram, which lies below Mount Masius, between the Khabour and the Euphrates. It is famous in Roman history for the defeat of Crassus by the Parthians. **Canneh.** The eastern of the two roads just mentioned ran on to Calneh (of which Canneh is a variant), named in Gen. x. 10 as one of the cities built by Nimrod. It is probably represented by the modern *Niffer*, about sixty miles south-east of Babylon. It is named in Isa. x. 9 in connection with Carchemish, in Amos vi. 2 with Hamath the great, as conquered by the Assyrians. It has been conjecturally identified by the Targum and other ancient writers with Ctesiphon, but (?). **Eden**; spelt differently in the Hebrew from the Eden of Gen. ii. 8. It is probably identical with the Eden near Thelassar (*Tel-Assar*) of Isa. xxxvii. 12 and 2 Kings xix. 12, where, as here, it is connected with Haran as among the Assyrian conquests. Its site has not been determined, and it has been placed by some geographers in the hill-country above the Upper Mesopotamian plains; by others near the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates. The position of the Eden of Amos i. 5, near Damascus, points to a Syrian town of the same name. **The merchants of Sheba.** The recurrence of the name after the full mention of the people in ver. 22 arises probably from the fact that they were the carriers in the commerce between the Mesopotamian cities just named and Tyre. **Asshur.** The name may stand (Smend), as it commonly does, for Assyria as a country; but its juxtaposition with the names of cities has led some geographers (Movers, p. 252, in Keil) to identify with a city Sura (*Essurieh*) on the west bank of the Euphrates, above Thapsacus (the *Tiphsah* of 1 Kings iv. 24), and on the caravan-route which runs from Palmyra (the *Tadmor* of 2 Chron. viii. 4) to Haran. **Chilmad.** The name is not found elsewhere. The LXX. gives Charman, a town near the Euphrates, mentioned in Xenophon, 'Anab.,' i. 5. 10, as Charmande. It can scarcely have been a place of much general note, but may have had some special reputation which made it prominent in Tyrian commerce.

Ver. 24.—**In all sorts** of things; better, with the Revised Version, *in choice wares*. Hebrew, *articles of beauty*; or, as in margin of the Authorized Version, "*excellent* things." The words have been variously interpreted, (1) by Ewald, as "suits of armour;" (2) by Keil, as "stately dresses;" by Hävernick, as "works of art" generally. The description in detail that follows is so vivid as to give the impression that Ezekiel had seen the merchants of Sheba unloading their camels and bringing out their treasures as they arrived at Tyre. The blue clothes (*wrappings of blue*, as in the Revised Version) were the purple robes of Babylon, which were famous all over the world. The words that follow are somewhat obscure, but are probably rightly translated by Keil, "embroidered of twisted yarn, in-wound, and strong cords for thy wares." The yarn may have been used for the cordage of the Tyrian ships. The words, **made of cedar**, are in this rendering taken as an adjective, equivalent to "firm" or "strong" (so Fürst).

Ver. 25.—The verse begins a new section, and glides back into the original metaphor of the ship, as in vers. 4—9. The ships of Tarshish are used generically for merchant-ships. The catalogue of the commerce ends with ver. 24, and the more poetic imagery reappears. It was, as centring in herself all that they brought to her that the merchant-city was very glorious **in the midst of the waters.** For **sing of thee**, read, *the ships of Tarshish were thy caravans* (Revised Version). The word has also the sense of "wall," as in Jer. v. 10 and Job xxiv. 11; and this, describing the ships as the "wooden walls" of Tyre, gives a tenable sense here.

Ver. 26.—**Thy rowers have brought thee.** The metaphor goes on its course. The state-ship is in the open sea, and the east wind, the Euroclydon of the Mediterranean (Acts xxvii. 14), blows and threatens it with destruction (comp. Ps. xlviii. 7). In that destruction all who contributed to her prosperity were involved. The picture reminds us of the description of the ship of Tarshish in Jon. i. 4, 5. **The city shall be left**, in that terrible day, **in the heart of the seas** (Revised Version).

Ver. 28.—**The suburbs.** The word is so translated in ch. xlv. 2, and xlviii. 17, and is used of the pasture-lands round the cities of refuge in Numb. xxxv. 2. Here it is probably used in a wider sense for the

coast-lands of Phœnicia, or even (as in the margin) for the "waves" that washed the shores of the island-city. The Vulgate gives *classes* (equivalent to "fleets").

Vers. 29—31.—**And all that handle the oar**, etc. The picture is, perhaps, figurative. As Tyre itself was the great state-ship, so the other ships may stand for the other Phœnician cities that beheld her downfall. Looking to the picture itself, it presents the rowers and others as feeling that, if the great ship had been wrecked, there was little hope of safety for them, and so they leave their ships and stand on the coast wailing. (For **casting dust, as a sign of** mourning, see Josh. vii. 6; 1 Sam. iv. 12; Job ii. 12, *et al.*; for "wallowing in the dust," Jer. vi. 26; xxv. 34; Micah i. 10—16. For the "baldness" and "sackcloth" of ver. 31, see ch. vii. 18.)

Ver. 32.—As in other instances of extreme sorrow, the inarticulate signs of grief pass after a time into spoken words. **What** city is **like Tyrus**, etc.? What parallel can be found in the world's history, either for her magnificence or her fall? The shipwreck of her fortunes (we are still in the region of the prophet's metaphors) would be utter and irretrievable.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 2.—*A lamentation for Tyre.* In the previous chapter the prophet denounced judgment on Tyre; in this chapter he utters a lamentation over the doomed city. The one is in the spirit of vengeance, the other in the spirit of sympathy. The prophet thus reveals to us two elements in the Divine treatment of sin—first the wrath that punishes, then the tenderness that commiserates.

I. TYRE IS IN A LAMENTABLE CONDITION. At present she is wealthy and prosperous. But the prophet looks into the future and sees her doom approaching. Therefore he sings her funeral dirge while the thoughtless city still revels in luxury. Christ uttered his lament over Jerusalem before a shadow of approaching calamity had fallen on the wicked city. 1. *It is lamentable to be living under a doom of destruction.* In ignorance, unbelief, or carelessness, men enjoy life although they are guilty of sins that must bring down the wrath of Heaven. "As in the days that were before the Flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark" (Matt. xxiv. 38). But to thoughtful spectators such unseemly gaiety is only a source of profound distress. Surely if men would but look up, the sword of Damocles above their heads should arrest the untimely mirth. It is fearful for the wise to be lamenting over the approaching fate which the foolish will not perceive. 2. *It is more lamentable to be living in the sin that deserves this doom.* Sin is worse than its punishment. Whatever men may believe about the future, the present case of the sinner is most deplorable. If he glories in his shame, that shame is only the more lamentable. The most wretched condition of the prodigal son is that before he has come to himself, when he revels insanely in his degradation.

II. THE CONDITION OF TYRE EXCITES COMMISERATION IN THE SERVANT OF GOD. Ezekiel does not merely threaten vengeance, he bewails the ill-fated city. It was the crowning fault of Jonah that he had no pity for Nineveh (Jonah iv. 1). No one is fit to speak of future punishment who is not moved to tenderness by a contemplation of its woes. A harsh denunciatory style is not in harmony with the example of Hebrew prophecy, much less does it agree with the New Testament model. 1. *Sin should not destroy pity, but excite it.* Jerusalem was most wicked; therefore Christ wept (Luke xix. 41). 2. *The heathen call for our commiseration.* Missionary enterprises are founded on two great motives—the claims of Christ, and the pitiable condition of the Christless. Human brotherhood should excite sympathy for the condition of the most remote. This was here seen in Judaism; much more is it to be looked for in Christianity. 3. *We should be most concerned at the sin and danger of our friends.* Tyre was an old ally of Israel. If the Jews had been more faithful, possibly the Phœnicians might have been saved. Our negligence may be to blame for the fate of our friends.

III. THE LAMENTATION FOR TYRE DID NOT SAVE THE CITY. 1. *Lamentation will not save without repentance.* The fear of future punishment will not give a means of escape from that punishment. We must go further to a confession of sin and a desire for a better life. 2. *The lamentation of others will not save the impenitent.* Ezekiel's

elegy did not deliver Tyre. Even Christ's tears did not save Jerusalem. 3. *The cross of Christ is the supreme condition of salvation.* Our own tears, a prophet's tears, even Christ's tears, will not save. But Christ's death brings deliverance for all who will have it, by atoning for sin and reconciling the sinner to God. When no prophet's lamentation will move the hardened sinner, the sight of Christ on the cross dying for him should melt him to penitence.

Ver. 3 (last clause, "Thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty").—*Æstheticism as a religion.* The craze for æstheticism has been exalted into the creed of a new religion. It is well so see once for all what this means, and how hollow, foolish, and fatal are its pretensions.

I. ÆSTHETICISM AS A RELIGION IS THE WORSHIP OF BEAUTY. 1. It is more than the *enjoyment* of beauty, which is innocent and even helpful to a right appreciation of God's wonderful works. Beauty implies harmony and refinement; it excludes everything harsh and coarse. So far it is good. 2. Æstheticism is more than the effort to *produce* beauty. This aim of art is good. 3. It is more also than the *consecration* of beauty to the service of religion. This is right; we should bring our best to God; religion should be honoured with the homage rendered to it by art. 4. But æstheticism as a religion makes an *idol* of the sacrifice, by putting the beauty, which should be enlisted in the service of God, in the place of God himself. It is bowing the knee to beauty. It sees nothing higher than the perfection of grace and colour and melody. This is as much idolatry as the Hottentot's adoration of a hideous fetish.

II. ÆSTHETICISM AS A RELIGION MAY BE JOINED TO THE GREATEST ERRORS. The beautiful is not always the true. There are lovely lies and there are ugly truths. By exalting the idea of the beautiful above all else, we sacrifice truth wherever the two do not agree. Thus the sterner facts of life are ignored and its less attractive duties left out of account.

III. ÆSTHETICISM AS A RELIGION RISKS MORALITY. It is satisfied with something lower than the beauty of holiness. If it rose to the celestial beauty, it could not afford to discard goodness, for all beauty that admits evil is corrupted with moral ugliness; but this is not perceived by the religion of æstheticism. Therefore there is a degradation of the very idea of beauty. Too often this is in danger of falling even lower, till beauty becomes a tempter to sin.

IV. ÆSTHETICISM AS A RELIGION WILL NOT SATISFY THE SOUL. A man cannot live on the perpetual contemplation of a lily. Too much beauty cloys. The soul needs the sustenance of solid truth. It requires inward spiritual grace. In the hour of temptation and in the season of great sorrow the religion of beauty utterly fails. It may charm the sentimental; it has no spell for the suffering; it cannot save the fallen; it has no evangel.

V. ÆSTHETICISM AS A RELIGION CANNOT AVERT RUIN. Tyre was proud of her beauty and confident in it. But this was only a piece of senseless self-deception. Her imposing palaces did not keep back the invader; they rather invited his ruthless armies. She found no security in the vain boast, "I am of perfect beauty." There is no redemption in æstheticism. The sinner will not find here any refuge from the doom of his guilt. It would be a poor diet for unfallen angels; for fallen men it is assuredly no healing balm. Beauty has been brought down to shame and suffering. No culture of art or literature will lift the refined mind out of the danger that threatens "the common herd" of sinners. Cultured and rough people must come through the same strait gate of penitence and walk the same narrow way of the footsteps of Christ if they would hope for salvation.

Ver. 13.—*The slave-trade.* Among the wares that the Phœnicians imported into Asia were Greek slaves. "With the persons of men . . . did they trade for thy wares" from Javan and elsewhere. Thus early have we a picture of that hideous traffic in human flesh which is desolating the continent of Africa in our own day.

I. THE SLAVE-TRADE IS CARRIED ON TO A TREMENDOUS EXTENT. This is no small evil. Every traveller into the interior of Africa writes of its wide prevalence. Whole provinces, vast regions as big as European kingdoms, are completely wrecked and

depopulated. We are here face to face with one of the most gigantic evils of the human race.

II. THE SLAVE-TRADE IS DIABOLICALLY CRUEL. There is cruelty in the very seizing of innocent human beings, depriving them of their liberty, tearing them from their families, driving them from their native villages, and exporting them to foreign countries, there to live in perpetual bondage. But the manner in which this process is carried out aggravates the cruelty of it immensely. No proper provision is made for the transport of great companies of men, women, and children through vast regions of African forest to the coast, and thence by sea to their destination. By far the larger portion of the stolen victims perish on the way, after suffering piteously.

III. THE SLAVE-TRADE IS AN OUTRAGE ON HUMANITY. All slaves are our fellow-men. The Greek slaves of antiquity were higher in race than their captors. But we have no reason to believe that they were treated so cruelly as the African slaves are treated by the Arabs. The modern slaves are lower in civilization than their captors —they cannot be lower in morals. But it is the more shameful that a powerful people should oppress these children of nature. They are human, and God "hath made of one blood all nations of men" (Acts xvii. 26). Mankind is insulted in the person of the slaves and degraded to the level of devilry in that of their hunters.

IV. THE SLAVE-TRADE IS A WRONG IN THE SIGHT OF HEAVEN. The notion that the Arabs are civilizing Africa, and even preparing for Christianity by leading the native people out of their heathen darkness to the belief in one God and the higher life of Mohammedanism, is not encouraged by the reports of those who have witnessed what is happening on the spot. On the contrary, the enforced conversion of whole tribes who are terrorized by the slave-hunters cannot mean any real advance in religion, while the awful wickedness of the trade carried on by these Mohammedan missionaries is one of the greatest sins in the sight of God.

V. THE SLAVE-TRADE MUST BE STOPPED. No crusade could be more needed or more blessed in its result than one that was wisely directed for the suppression of this curse of Africa. Christianity is the inspiration of philanthropy. Christ infuses an enthusiasm of humanity in his true followers. Christians should not rest till they have done all that in them lies to suppress the vile, cruel slave-trade.

Ver. 26.—*Great waters of affliction.* The troubles that are to overtake Tyre in the Chaldean invasion are compared by the prophet to a sea of great waters into which the rowers have brought the ship—an image that would come home to a maritime people.

I. SOULS MAY HAVE TO ENCOUNTER GREAT WATERS OF AFFLICTION. 1. Their troubles are *multitudinous.* People talk of "a sea of troubles," referring to the number of distresses that they have met with. 2. Their troubles are *restless.* They come with changes, and they make disturbance like the ceaseless tossing and moaning of the sea. 3. Their troubles are *aggressive.* The great waters roll in waves, beat against the ship, sweep her deck, and threaten to dash her to pieces. Troubles are not merely negative evils like cold and darkness; they are positive in their activity, and they threaten to dash the soul to destruction. 4. Their troubles are *overwhelming.* The waves pour over the ship, the great waters threaten to drown the sailor. 5. Their troubles are *deep.* Fathoms deep the sinking ship goes down in the black, engulfing waters. So souls sink in sorrow and despair.

II. THESE GREAT WATERS OF AFFLICTION MAY BE FOUND WHERE ONLY PROSPERITY IS EXPECTED. The Phœnicians were not helpless landsmen. Familiar with the sea from their childhood, they regarded it as the highway of their commerce. Their wealth was got by trading over its waters. Yet the treacherous sea can turn against its most trusting children. None dread it so much as sailors who have learnt its power and their own helplessness when it rises in its fury. It often happens that calamity meets a man in his most familiar haunts. Where he looks for a blessing he meets with a curse. This is possible with all earthly things. Therefore the most confident is not secure against trouble.

III. TOO OFTEN MEN BRING THEMSELVES INTO THEIR GREATEST TROUBLES. "*Thy rowers* have brought thee into great waters." Instead of keeping to the sheltered course in the lea of the cliffs, the heedless rowers have pulled out into a reach of water

where the sea is running high. It is no fault of the waters that the ship is thus thrust into danger. Men rush headlong into trouble by folly and sin. They have no right to set down the consequences to the inscrutable mystery of Providence.

IV. GOD IS THE ONE REFUGE FROM THE GREAT WATERS OF AFFLICTION. 1. *He may still the waters.* As Christ quieted the storm on Gennesaret, so will he still tumults of trouble. Our course is to pray for help, and trust him where we can do nothing for ourselves. 2. *He may draw us out of the waters.* Thus David says, "He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters" (Ps. xviii. 16). Christ put forth his hand and saved Peter from perishing (Matt. xiv. 31). When circumstances cannot be altered, we may be uplifted and saved from sinking in them. 3. *He may be with us on the waters.* It may not be possible to alter circumstances nor to remove us from them. Then we may be strengthened to withstand them, as St. Paul's ship was strengthened when the sailors undergirded it.

"With Christ in the vessel, I smile at the storm."

Ver. 32.—*An incomparable doom.* The dreadful doom of Tyre is regarded as without parallel. Consider why this is so.

I. THE GREATEST SIN BRINGS THE GREATEST DOOM. All men do not sin equally, and all will not be punished to the same extent—some with few stripes, others with many stripes. Tyre sinned grievously, therefore Tyre was to be punished grievously. It is not the man who thinks himself the lightest sinner who will certainly be let off with the smallest amount of punishment. We are not to be our own judges and the assessors of our own guilt. There will be many great surprises in the day of judgment. The heaviest doom will be for those who knew the right way and yet did not walk in it (Luke xii. 47, 48). Therefore there will be heavier penalties even than those earned by Tyre. Christ says it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for Bethsaida and Chorazin, for the heathen Phœnician cities had not the opportunities that were afforded to the Galilæan towns in which Christ had laboured (Luke x. 13). If London sins like Tyre, London's doom must be greater than Tyre's, for a city of Christendom has privileges which the pagans never enjoyed.

II. THE GREATEST DOOM WILL BE FELT IN CONTRAST TO THE HIGHEST PROSPERITY. The fall of Tyre was most appalling because her previous splendour had been most imposing. Dives writhing in agony in Hades arrests attention because he was previously enjoying the greatest luxury. The contrast is not merely a striking dramatic effect for the outside observer. It produces the most intense results in the feelings of the sufferer. We feel by contrast, and the greater the contrast the keener are our feelings. Thus a millionaire brought down to destitution feels the hardships of the poor-house far more acutely than the beggar who has never been accustomed to more sumptuous fare. Souls that have tasted of Christ's grace must suffer more agonies, if they become castaways at last, than souls that have never experienced its blessedness.

III. THE GREATEST DOOM MAY BE AVERTED. These things are written for our instruction—to warn us to flee from the approaching wrath, not to paralyze us with hopeless dismay. Tyre was overthrown, and its foundations became drying-grounds for the fisherman's nets exactly as Ezekiel had predicted (ch. xxvi. 5). The threats of future punishment are equally certain so long as the sin that rouses them remains. But Christ has come to destroy the curse of sin and to free the soul from its doom. It is foolish to seek some faint encouragement from risky attempts to minimize the prospect of future punishment, and so to lull the soul to sleep in its peril. There can be no use in exaggerating the statements of Scripture, nor can there be any wisdom in making the least of them. True wisdom lies in recognizing the unspeakable horror of sin and its doom to the full, and then turning to Christ for deliverance from the sin as much as from its penalties.

Ver. 35.—*A great surprise.* All the neighbouring inhabitants are astonished at the terrible and unexpected fate of strong, proud Tyre. The dramatic event sends a shock of amazement through all the region round about. This great surprise is instructive.

I. MEN EXPECT THE CUSTOMARY TO CONTINUE. The intellect is conservative. Novelty is unlooked for. We believe that the future will be like the past for no other reason than that, on the whole, things seem to be stable and the course of the world

uniform. But every now and then the unexpected happens, as though to warn us that things may not continue for ever in their present quiet state. The antediluvians were too much accustomed to the regular rotation of the seasons to believe Noah's preaching. Vesuvius had slumbered for unknown years before the great eruption overthrew Herculaneum and Pompeii, and the consequence was that its foot was covered with buildings. People have but faint apprehensions of Divine judgment because life runs on at present in its old groove.

II. SUPERFICIAL PROSPERITY IS OFTEN MISTAKEN FOR SOLID SECURITY. Tyre was so great and rich and beautiful that her neighbours had never anticipated her downfall. There is no surprise at the destruction of poor little pastoral kingdoms like Ammon and Moab. But when a nation that is in the foremost rank of the world's progress is smitten down, men are simply confounded. Thus the destruction of Tyre surprised her neighbours, as the sack of Rome by the Goths astounded the contemporaries of St. Augustine and St. Jerome. Men have to learn that splendour is not strength, and that prosperity is not its own security.

III. PEOPLE MAY BE TAKEN FOR A TIME AT THEIR OWN ESTIMATE. Tyre boasted of her magnificence. "Thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty" (ver. 3). She prided herself in her strong sea-walls, and until they were tested in battle none knew that they were not strong enough to withstand the shock of the northern invader. The Church is proud of her orthodoxy, her splendour, her strength, and thus she may lead simple minds to trust in her certain safety. But all such boasting brings no real strength. It goes down at a touch from hard realities. Then the deceived are dismayed. In the end the discovery brings shame on the head of the boasters.

IV. A FEARFUL CALAMITY IS ASTOUNDING. We use big words, but we fail to comprehend their meaning; and even when our own language is translated into fact we are surprised at seeing what it really meant. There is a tendency to water down the strong language of Scripture. No doubt this is largely due to a reaction against the coarse literalism of earlier ages. A revolt from descriptions of future punishment which quiet, thinking people could not believe to be true of their own familiar acquaintances, has landed us in a region of mild theology. But there are stern and terrible realities in God's judgments on that horrible thing sin. When these are witnessed assuredly they will give a great surprise to complacent people who are now content to imbibe the thinnest dilutions of Scripture doctrines of coming judgment.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

VERS. 1—25.—*The beauty, glory, and replenishment of the city of Tyre.* This portion of Ezekiel's writings evinces a very remarkable acquaintance with the geography and the economics of the then known world. Perhaps the prophet, living in the heart of a great Oriental monarchy, and in intercourse not only with his countrymen, but with men of various nationalities, may have acquired something more of a cosmopolitan habit of mind than was common among the Jews. Certain it is that the commercial relations of Tyre are described with singular care and minute accuracy. It is evident that, in the view of Ezekiel, every society and community of men was in some way connected with the reign of God upon earth; that whilst in a special sense Jehovah was accounted the Sovereign of the Hebrews, there was a very important sense in which all peoples were subject to Divine authority, and were the objects of Divine regard and interest. The sympathies of Ezekiel, though patriotic, were far from being narrow and provincial. He was able, by the force of historical imagination, to consider Tyre as, for a time and for a purpose, the centre of the life and activity of the world. Though inspired to foretell Tyre's destruction, the prophet was by no means insensible to Tyre's beauty and splendour, to the magnificent range of the city's commerce and interests, to the importance of the city to the work and well-being of the nations. There may have been something of rhetorical art in thus dilating upon Tyre's glory in the very moment of foretelling Tyre's fall. But the religious motive was the strongest. Ezekiel wished to show that, however indispensable a city or a state may be in the view of men, God does not regard it as indispensable, and may even fulfil his purposes

by bringing about its dissolution and destruction. In this brilliant sketch of the position of Tyre among the nations of the earth, we may recognize—

I. THE STATELINESS OF THE CITY'S BEAUTY.

II. THE SPLENDOUR OF THE CITY'S FLEETS.

III. THE SKILL OF THE CITY'S MARINERS.

IV. THE VALOUR OF THE CITY'S ARMIES.

V. THE VASTNESS OF THE CITY'S TRADE. It is in this connection that Ezekiel introduces neighbouring and even distant states, showing in detail in what manner each was connected with Tyre, what were the natural productions or manufactures which they brought to the world's great emporium. It was as a commercial port that Tyre was celebrated, and by its ships and its fearless, adventurous navigators distant lands were brought within the range of civilization.

VI. THE ABUNDANCE OF THE CITY'S WEALTH.

VII. THE GLORY OF THE CITY'S RENOWN.

VIII. THE HOLLOWNESS OF THE CITY'S PROSPERITY. No wonder that Tyre was the envied of the nations; no wonder that men looked upon the city as secure of a long lease of opulence, of ease and luxury, of splendour, of power, and of fame. Yet beneath all this there was wanting the basis upon which alone can be surely reared the edifice of true prosperity. There was boasting and arrogance; but there was no humility, no subjection to the righteous sway of the Eternal King, no recognition of the sacred responsibilities which accompany the possession of advantages and acquisitions such as those of Tyre. Thus it was that in the time of trial the city was found incapable of enduring and of profiting by Divine discipline. It was founded, not upon the rock of righteousness and piety, but upon the shifting quicksands of worldly prosperity and renown. It fell, and great was the fall of it. "Every plant," said Jesus, "which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be plucked up."—T.

Vers. 26, 27.—*National shipwreck.* The metaphor employed in this passage by the poet-prophet is peculiarly appropriate. What so fitted to represent the maritime city Tyre as a gallant ship? In figurative language Ezekiel pictures the stateliness and prosperity, followed by the wreck and destruction, of the famous mistress of the seas.

I. TYRE IN ITS PROSPERITY IS LIKE A MAJESTIC AND RICHLY LADEN GALLEY. Commerce and wealth, maritime and military greatness, are characteristic of the famous Phœnician port; and these are represented as the freight of the vessel as she skims the surface of the smooth waters beneath the sunny skies.

II. TYRE IN ITS TIME OF TRIAL IS LIKE A GALLEY OVERTAKEN BY A SUDDEN AND VIOLENT TEMPEST. The vessel is built for calm weather, and is ill fitted to contend with storms. When war was waged against Tyre by "the king of kings," Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, then the power of "the queen of the seas" was put to the proof. Not that Tyre succumbed at once; the resistance offered was long and stubborn; the city was fighting for its life. It was not like a great and populous nation occupying an extensive territory, which may be vanquished, but cannot be exterminated. If the city upon the rock was captured and destroyed, Tyre was annihilated as well as conquered. Hence the severity of the struggle, which was a struggle, not for wealth and power merely, but for existence.

III. TYRE IN ITS DEFEAT AND DESTRUCTION IS LIKE A GALLEY WHICH, WITH ALL ITS CARGO, SINKS IN THE MIDST OF THE SEAS. The great waters and the east wind work their will. The rowers are powerless; skill and strength are of no avail. The richly laden vessel goes down with all her costly freight and gallant crew. Riches and magnificence, valour and experience, are powerless to save when the decree has gone forth that opportunities have been neglected, privileges have been abused, that moral laws have been violated, and that the God of nations has been defied. The lessons of history have been studied to little purpose if they have not taught us that "the Lord reigneth," that he "doeth according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth," that he "brings down the lofty from their seat." The multitude of the host and much strength are a vain refuge from the justice and the power of "the Lord of lords."—T.

Vers. 28—36.—*The bewailing of the city.* Very picturesque and impressive is this representation of the effect produced upon the nations by the fall of Tyre. So world-

wide was the city's commerce, that no people, however distant, could be unaffected by the catastrophe; and so awful was its fate, that no sensitive mind could contemplate it unmoved. To the vision of the prophet-poet, the galley labours and strains, and at last sinks in the waters of the Mediterranean. The dwellers upon the land and those who sail the sea gather together upon the shore to witness the shipwreck. Their cry and bitter wailing fill the air. Every sign of humiliation and of mourning is exhibited by the spectators. A lamentation, a dirge, rises from the company of those deeply moved by sympathetic sorrow. They celebrate the glories of the past; they bear witness to present calamity and woe; they confess with terror that Tyre never shall be more. We trace in the demeanour and the language here depicted—

I. ASTONISHMENT AT THE SPECTACLE OF DESTRUCTION. The scene was so unexpected, so much in contradiction to all human anticipation and foresight, so revolutionary, so appalling, that amazement was the predominant emotion of those who witnessed it.

II. SENSE OF THE WORLD'S LOSS BY REASON OF THE SHIPWRECK. The earth seemed poorer for the overthrow and annihilation of Tyre—the leading seaport and commercial centre of the nations. In ver. 33 this loss is depicted, the loss alike of peoples and of kings. Riches and merchandise disappeared, engulfed with Tyre in the insatiable deep. The march of human civilization seemed to be arrested.

III. CONTRAST WITH THE REMEMBERED AND MEMORABLE PAST. Cities, like men, are sometimes best understood and appreciated when they are no more. Those who recollected Tyre's splendour would, in their old age, tell a new generation of the bygone wonders. "Who is there like Tyre, like her that is brought to silence in the midst of the sea?" The puny successors to the peerless seaport would point many a moral, and inspire many a regret for vanished glories.

IV. UNSETTLEMENT AND FOREBODING AS TO THE FUTURE. Astonishment is often associated with fear and trouble. When a vast calamity occurs, it is as if the fountains of the great deep were broken up. Men's hearts fail them for fear. What is to be the future of the world's history? What nation is secure? What throne is stable? What principle, what power, shall bear sway in coming times? There is but one answer to these questions, but one confidence that can never be shaken, "The kingdoms of the earth are the Lord's."—T.

Vers. 1—36.—*Wreck of a stately ship.* There is a striking resemblance between a gallant ship and an empire. Many persons and orders are united in a state under one governor or captain. There is a unity amid diversity. A state, like a ship, has interchange of interests with other nations. Upon the skill and prudence of the pilot depends the prosperity of empire or ship. The whole life of Tyre was poured into the channel of commerce. Hence the figure would be readily appreciated.

I. THE COMPONENT PARTS OF THIS SHIP WERE GATHERED WORLD-WIDE. The timber was supplied from one country, iron from another, cordage from a third, sails from a fourth. Evidently God intended that nations should be linked together in interdependence. The commodities essential for civilization are wisely distributed through many lands, so that friendly intercommunion may be mutual advantage. National exclusiveness is substantial loss. No country is prosperous in the highest measure that is not willing to import learning and legislation, scientific inventions and natural products, from other lands. Tyre owed her greatness and her prosperity to a large and generous commerce. She was willing to receive from the most obscure or most distant people. The ripest sage can learn from a little child.

II. THE SHIP'S CREW. "Thy wise men, O Tyrus, that were in thee, were thy pilots." Sailors, helmsmen, and defenders were chosen of those most skilful for their particular work. Such a course is the only reasonable one; and yet, in the direction of political affairs, this course is often abandoned. Men are allowed to rule, or are chosen to rule, either in supreme or subordinate places, because of their pedigree, or their titles, or their wealth, or their arrogance. The interests of the state are imperilled, the safety of the state is jeopardized, by partiality or by partisanship. The only qualification for office is personal fitness. No one would entrust his life in a ship which was not commanded by a skilful and experienced captain.

III. THE SHIP'S BUSINESS. The proper business of a ship is usefulness. She has been constructed and manned to convey passengers and commodities from land to land.

The overplus of material substance in one land may thus be conveyed to lands where lack is felt. Interchange promotes mutual advantage, mutual confidence, mutual good will. The nation so employed is a blessing to the world. Knowledge is diffused, healthy emulation is aroused, religious truth is disseminated.

IV. EVERY DETAIL OF A NATION'S COMMERCE HAS AN INTEREST IN THE MIND OF GOD. It is very noteworthy that God should have made known to Ezekiel all these particulars in the history and commerce of Tyre; for it is obvious that the prophet in Chaldea could have known them in no other way—unless, indeed, he had been there before the Captivity. Not an item in the mercantile transactions of Tyre but received the cognizance of God. Every purchase, every sale, obtained either his smile or his frown. Nor, if we reflect on the matter, need we wonder. If God takes an interest in all our personal affairs, so must he also in our united interests and in our public concerns. If he stoops to count the hairs of our head, he is only consistent with himself when he notes every legislative measure and every international transaction.

V. SELF-ESTEEM IS AN ELEMENT OF WEAKNESS. "O Tyrus, thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty." A well-built ship, well fitted and complete, is a thing of beauty. It has a charm for the eye. But herein lies a danger. If the owner be taken up with the beauty of his ship, he is prone to neglect her planks and bolts and cordage. The external brightness of a ship is no security against inward rottenness. So is it with the state politic. There may be many outward signs of prosperity—wealth, magnificence, high reputation, prosperous commerce—and yet there may be a worm at the root, a hidden leak that may founder the gallant ship. The only real element of stability is righteousness. The only true rampart of defence is the favour of Jehovah. Instead of self-esteem, there ought to be thankfulness. Instead of self-boasting, there should be trust in God.

VI. THE STOUTEST SHIP IS LIABLE TO WRECK. Every part in the construction and furniture of a ship is a human contrivance to harmonize with the forces of God in nature, and to resist what is perilous to life. Yet human contrivances are, at the best, imperfect. They cannot face, in serious battle, the material forces of God. Some simple occurrence in nature, such as a waterspout, an electric spark, or an earthquake, may shatter in a moment the staunchest ship. Sooner or later every ship finishes its career. Scarcely ever has a ship endured the natural period of a human life. If it has braved a thousand storms, it yields to natural decay, and falls to pieces in the harbour. Apart from God, there is nothing durable, nothing permanent.

VII. THE WRECK OF A NOBLE SHIP PRODUCES WIDESPREAD GRIEF. It is a spectacle distressing to the eye to see a fine ship wrecked upon a rocky coast. But as soon as the imagination takes in the full meaning of the event, the pain felt is greater. We think of the crew—all their privations and anxieties and final death. We think of desolate widows and orphaned children. We think of the loss of valuable property, the frustration of hopes, the impotence of human contrivances and skill, the blow to further enterprise, the sense of hidden danger which surrounds us all. Wider still and deeper is the terror awakened in men's minds when a flourishing empire succumbs to fierce invasion. Human hopes are crushed. Security to life and property is disturbed. A great panic spreads. Life in every place seems imperilled. If Tyre falls, what empire, what city, can be safe? Things material often receive rude disturbance, that we may find our security in that kingdom "which cannot be shaken."—D.

Vers. 1—36.—*A celebration of remarkable prosperity.* "The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Now, thou son of man, take up a lamentation for Tyrus," etc. "We have here," says Hengstenberg, "the lamentation over the fall of Tyre, announced in the foregoing chapter. First, its present glory is presented at full length to the view (vers. 1—25); then its fall, the importance of which can only be understood from the knowledge of its glory. We must profoundly know the *gloria mundi* if we are to take to heart the *sic transit gloria mundi*." So the prophet sketches the riches and luxury, the power and glory, of the island-city. We have before us—

I. A CELEBRATION OF REMARKABLE PROSPERITY. Ezekiel exhibits several distinct features of the prosperity of Tyre. 1. *Her advantageous situation.* "Thou that dwellest at the entry [Hebrew, 'entrances'] of the sea . . . thy borders are in the heart of the seas." Being built on an island, the sea was accessible from every side of

Tyre, and its ships might go forth into all seas with their merchandise. Those towns which are situated on navigable rivers, or on seaports, generally become rich and prosperous. The situation of Tyre was favourable both to its safety and to its commercial prosperity. 2. *The grandeur of her buildings.* "Thy builders have perfected thy beauty." In the architecture and construction of her edifices, Tyre occupied a distinguished position amongst the cities of her age (cf. ch. xxvi. 12, 17). 3. *Her great riches, important handicrafts, and extensive commerce.* In vers. 5—9 the riches of the proud city are indicated. In these verses "the state of Tyre appears under the figure of a splendid ship. . . . In the Tyrian state," says Hengstenberg, "the representation by the symbol of a ship was the more natural, as it was a maritime power. The capital lay like a ship in the midst of the sea, and was surrounded with a forest of masts." All the materials and fittings and furniture of this ship were of the best and richest materials, indicating the wealth and luxury of the Tyrians. Persons from other Phœnician cities are represented as serving in subordinate offices in the ship, while the chief offices were held by the Tyrians themselves, thus indicating that the powers of those cities were used to advance the prosperity of Tyre, while the Tyrians retained authority in their state in their own hands. Tyre was also famous for, and her prosperity was advanced by, her handicraftsmen. In both ver. 16 and ver. 18 we read of "the multitude of her handiworks." The prophet does not mention the nature of these arts and manufactures. But the Tyrians were skilful in the mechanical arts. Much beautiful artistic work in brass or copper in the temple which Solomon built was executed by Tyrian workmen (1 Kings vii. 13—45). Moreover, Tyre was celebrated for the manufacture of costly robes, jewellery, etc. The wide extent of the trade of the island-city is exhibited by Ezekiel in this chapter (vers. 12—25). Without entering into the details of that account here, it will be clear to any one who will examine it that Tyre "traded with every part of the then known world, either immediately or through the medium of other nations." So great was her prosperity, riches, etc. 4. *Her strong fortifications and military defences.* (Vers. 10, 11.) Here are walls and towns manned by mercenary soldiers for the protection of the city. There was a general tendency in commercial cities to employ mercenaries for their military service, "on account of the high wages which may be obtained by artisans in a thriving community compared with the ordinary pay of a soldier." To this tendency Tyre had conformed. In her service there were hardy mountaineers from Persia, Africans obtained through the commerce of Egypt, Phœnicians from Arvad, and the Gammadim, or valorous men, or bold champions—a designation, probably, of a troop eminent for bravery. Thus was Tyre favourably situated, splendidly built, abundant in riches, prosperous in trade, and efficiently guarded.

II. A CELEBRATION OF REMARKABLE PROSPERITY INORDINATELY GLORIED IN. "Thou, O Tyre, hast said, I am perfect in beauty" (ver. 3; cf. Isa. xxiii. 8, 9). The Tyrians boasted themselves in their riches, prosperity, and power. In the next chapter this proud boasting is very strikingly exhibited (vers. 2—5). Pride, self-confidence, and sinful boasting the Tyrians had grown into by reason of their position, prosperity, and power. Babylon in the height of her glory and strength manifested a similar spirit. She said in her heart, "I shall be a lady for ever . . . I am, and there is none else beside me," etc. (Isa. xlvii. 7, 8). There is grievous sin and great danger in such pride of heart and presumption of speech. It is worse than vain for either a community or an individual to boast of worldly power or prosperity; for commanding power may soon be reduced to abject weakness, and conspicuous prosperity to deplorable destitution. "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might," etc. (Jer. ix. 23, 24).

III. A CELEBRATION OF REMARKABLE PROSPERITY WITH A SIGNIFICANT OMISSION. In recounting the glories of Tyre, nothing is said of her religion or righteousness. The prophet makes no mention of her piety towards God, or her kindness or justice towards men. He praises her "for all that she had that was praiseworthy. He has nothing to say of her religion, her piety, her charity, her being a refuge to the distressed, or using her interest to do good offices among her neighbours; but she lived great, and had a great trade, and all the trading part of mankind made court to her." A nation is in a sad plight when its only glories are temporal and material, when it is not established and exalted by reverence and righteousness. In such case its glories are likely to be evanescent, its prosperity fleeting, and its power insecure.

IV. A CELEBRATION OF REMARKABLE PROSPERITY DISASTROUSLY TERMINATED. "Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters," etc. (vers. 26, 27). The figure of a ship, which was dropped while narrating the trade of Tyre, is here resumed, and her fall is depicted as a shipwreck. The great waters and the east wind, which in that district was marked by violent and continued blasts, indicate the sufferings and perils which issued in the overthrow of the proud city. Notwithstanding her secure situation, abundant riches, extensive commerce, and strong defences, she has been reduced to ruins. "Nothing human," says Greenhill, "can protect a sinful city and people from the judgments of God. Tyrus was as strong a place as the world had; her walls, towers, ships, wise, strong men, could not do it. Tyrus was as rich a place as any under heaven—she had a multitude of riches; yet these kept her not from being brought into great waters. What power or art of man can keep off the wind from a ship when it is at sea? It is not in the power of all the seamen or mariners in the world to do it; neither can any number of men, or all men, keep off a judgment of God when it is coming upon a sinful place."

V. THE DISASTROUS TERMINATION OF REMARKABLE PROSPERITY VARIOUSLY REGARDED. (Vers. 28—36.) Some would look upon the overthrow of Tyre: 1. *With lamentation.* "At the sound of the cry of thy pilots the suburbs shall shake," etc. (vers. 28—33). They bewail the fall of the island-city, not merely because of that catastrophe, but also because of its significance. If the queen of the sea is ruined, what city upon earth can be safe? (See our homily on ch. xxvi. 15—18.) 2. *With affright.* "All the inhabitants of the isles are astonished at thee, and their kings are horribly afraid, they are troubled in their countenance" (ver. 35). Alarm for their own safety would be joined with their amazement at the downfall of Tyre. 3. *With scoffing.* "The merchants among the peoples hiss at thee" in malicious joy. They who had been her rivals in commerce, and they who had envied her prosperity, would look upon the ruin of Tyre with rejoicing and scorn. Tyre had exulted in the destruction of Jerusalem, and when her evil day came there were those who exulted in her destruction. "The Lord is a God of recompenses, he shall surely requite."

CONCLUSION. Our subject has an impressive message to a nation like our own. In some respects we resemble the proud queen of the sea, particularly in our insular situation, our world-wide commerce, and our great power. Let us take heed that we do not resemble her in her sins—her selfishness, her self-sufficiency, her pride, her boasting. Only as our life as a nation is marked by righteousness and the fear of God have we any reliable guarantee for our continued permanence and prosperity.—W. J.

Vers. 12—25.—*A picture of extensive commercial relations.* "Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kind of riches," etc. The following topics are suggested for consideration.

I. THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE PRODUCTS OF CREATION IN THE VARIOUS COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD. We see from the verses before us that Tyre drew its supplies from and sent its productions to most or all the places of the then known civilized world. No country can supply its own inhabitants with all the necessaries and luxuries of life. Every country produces something which, if not needful, is desirable for other countries. No one can say to another, "I have no need of thee." In this arrangement we have an evidence of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator.

II. THE MUTUAL DEPENDENCE AND INTERCOURSE OF NATIONS ARISING OUT OF THE DISTRIBUTION OF THEIR RESPECTIVE PRODUCTS. Tyre had commercial relations with all the places mentioned in our text. Amongst these different peoples there was a mutual dependence. The interests not even of the mightiest and most extensive empire are absolutely self-contained or independent of others. The strong depend upon the weak at least for some things. To-day Great Britain draws supplies for her countless and multifarious wants from every quarter and almost (if we may use the expression) from every corner of the world, and sends her products to every part of the world. This mutual dependence and intercourse of nations helps forward the development and progress of mankind. It contributes to the recognition of excellence in others, though it may be of a type different from our own, to the enlargement of our views and ideas, to the promotion of peace, etc.

III. THE DUTY AND INTEREST OF NATIONS TO CULTIVATE PEACEFUL AND FRIENDLY

MUTUAL RELATIONS. Mutual dependence and interests should beget mutual consideration. Misunderstandings and wars amongst nations are exceedingly prejudicial to commercial development and prosperity. Wars severely check both the cultivation and the distribution of the products of the countries which are engaged therein. They lay waste lands, they block up ports, they draw men away from peaceful and remunerative industries, and they tax national resources which might otherwise be profitably employed. A just and comprehensive view of commercial relations and the conditions of commercial prosperity would constitute a strong barrier against war and a powerful incentive to international peace and friendship.

> "War's a game which, were their subjects wise,
> Kings would not play at. Nations would do well
> To extort their truncheons from the puny hands
> Of heroes, whose infirm and baby minds
> Are gratified with mischief; and who spoil,
> Because men suffer it, their toy the world."
> (Cowper.)

IV. THE DIVINE OBSERVATION OF COMMERCIAL RELATIONS AND PRACTICES. This minute and extensive recognition and enumeration of the dealings of Tyre with other places and peoples, in the inspired message of the prophet, implies such observation. God's law is coextensive with man's life. No province of our being and activity is beyond his authority. No transactions of our life escape his notice. Well does Matthew Henry say, "This account of the trade of Tyre intimates to us that God's eye is upon men, and that he takes cognizance of what they do when they are employed in their worldly business, not only when they are at church, praying and hearing, but when they are in their markets and fairs, and upon the exchange, buying and selling, which is a good reason why we should in all our dealings keep a conscience void of offence, and have our eye always upon him whose eye is always upon us." And Scott, "They who engage in commerce should remember that they are the servants of God, and learn to conduct their business according to the precepts of his Word, in submission to his providence, and with an aim to his glory."

V. THE SUPREME IMPORTANCE IN COMMERCE OF RIGHTEOUS PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES. Selfish disregard of the interests of others (ch. xxvi. 2), proud boasting of her own power, prosperity, and glory (ver. 3; ch. xxviii. 2—5); and a debasing idolatry,—led to the overthrow of Tyre. Apart from righteousness, commercial and all other prosperity will pass away. Tyre was once the most famous city "in the world for trade and commerce. But," as Bishop Newton observes, "trade is a fluctuating thing; it passed from Tyre to Alexandria, from Alexandria to Venice, from Venice to Antwerp, from Antwerp to Amsterdam and London, the English rivalling the Dutch, as the French are now (1754) rivalling both. All nations almost are wisely applying themselves to trade; and it behoves those who are in possession of it to take the greatest care that they do not lose it. It is a plant of tender growth, and requires sun and soil and fine seasons to make it thrive and flourish. It will not grow like the palm tree, which with the more weight and pressure rises the more. Liberty is a friend to that, as that is a friend to liberty. But the greatest enemy to both is licentiousness, which tramples upon all law and lawful authority, encourages riots and tumults, promotes drunkenness and debauchery, sticks at nothing to supply its extravagance, practises every art of illicit gain, ruins credit, ruins trade, and will in the end ruin liberty itself. Neither kingdoms nor commonwealths, neither public companies nor private persons, can long carry on a beneficial flourishing trade without virtue, and what virtue teacheth, sobriety, industry, frugality, modesty, honesty, punctuality, humanity, charity, the love of our country, and the fear of God. The prophets will inform us how the Tyrians lost it; and the like causes will always produce like effects."[1]—W. J.

[1] 'Diss. on the Prophecies,' diss. xi.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ver. 1.—From the city the prophet passes to its ruler, who concentrated in himself whatever was most arrogant and boastful in the temper of his people. He is described here as a "prince," in ver. 12 as "king," and the combination of the two words points probably to some peculiarity of the Tyrian constitution. "Prince" it will be remembered, is constantly used by Ezekiel of Zedekiah (ch. vii, 27; xii. 20, *et al.*). The King of Tyre at the time was Ithobal or Ethbaal III. (Josephus, 'Contra Apion,' i. 21), who had taken part with Pharaoh-Hophra and Zedekiah in the league against Nebuchadnezzar. Ezekiel's description of what one may call his self-apotheosis may probably have rested on a personal knowledge of the man or of official documents.

Ver. 2.—**I am a God.** We are reminded of Isaiah's words (xiv. 13, 14) as to the King of Babylon. Did Ezekiel emphasize and amplify the boasts of Ethbaal, with a side-glance at the Chaldean king, who also was lifted up in the pride of his heart (Dan. iv. 30)? For like examples, see the boast of Hophra, in ch. xxix. 3; and the praise given to Herod Agrippa by the Tyrians (Acts xii. 21). It is noticeable that St. Paul's description of the man of sin (2 Thess. ii. 4) presents the same picture in nearly the same words. **I sit in the seat of God,** etc. Tyre was known as the Holy Island (Sanchon., edit. Orelli, p. 36). The city was thought of as rising from its waters like the rock-throne of God. **Though thou set thy heart.** The words remind us of the temptation in Gen. iii. 5. To forget the limitations of human ignorance and weakness, to claim an authority and demand a homage which belong to God, was the sin of the Prince of Tyre, as it had been that of Sennacherib, as it was of Nebuchadnezzar, as it has been since of the emperors of Rome, and of other rulers.

Ver. 3.—**Thou art wiser than Daniel,** etc. There is, of course, a marked irony in the words. Daniel was for Ezekiel—and there seems something singularly humble and pathetic in the prophet's reverence for his contemporary—the ideal at once of righteousness (ch. xiv. 14) and of wisdom. He was a revealer of the secrets of the future, and read the hearts of men. His fame was spread far and wide through the Chaldean empire. And this was the man with whom the King of Tyre compared himself with a self-satisfied sense of superiority, and he found the proof of his higher wisdom in his wealth. Here, again, I venture to trace a side-thrust at Nebuchadnezzar and his tendencies in the same direction, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have builded?"

Ver. 7.—**I will bring strangers,** etc. These are, of course, the hosts of many nations that made up the Chaldean army (comp. the parallel of ch. xxx. 11 and xxxi. 12). **The beauty of thy wisdom** is that of the city on which the prince looked as having been produced by his policy.

Vers. 8, 9.—The effect of the Chaldean invasion was to bring the king down to the nether world of the dead. In the use of the plural "deaths" we have a parallel to the "plurima mortis imago" of Virgil ('Æneid,' ii. 369). And this death was not to be like that of a hero-warrior, but as that of those who are slain in the midst of the seas, who fall, *i.e.*, in a naval battle, and are cast into the waters. Would he then repeat his boast, I am God?

Ver. 10.—The climax comes in the strongest language of Hebrew scorn. As the uncircumcised were to the Israelite (1 Sam. xvii. 36; xxxi. 4), so should the King of Tyre, unhonoured, unwept, with no outward marks of reverence, be among the great ones of the past who dwell in Hades. Ezekiel returns to the phrase in ch. xxxi. 18; xxxii. 24. The words receive a special force from the fact that the Phœnicians practised circumcision before their intercourse with the Greeks (Herod., ii. 104).

Ver. 12.—**Thou sealest up the sum,** etc. The noun is found only there and in ch. xliii. 10, where it is translated "pattern," but is cognate with the word rendered "tale" (equivalent to "measure") of Exod. v. 13, and "measure" in ch. xlv. 11. The probable meaning is, *Thou settest the seal to thy completeness (perfection).* Thou deemest that thou hast attained the consummation of all beauty and wisdom. The LXX. and the Vulgate give, "Thou art a seal;" and this suggests a parallelism with Jeremiah's words to Coniah (Jer. xxii. 24). The words were, of course, written with a keen irony. This was what the King of Tyre thought of himself.

Ver. 13.—**Thou hast been in Eden,** etc. The words are suggestive, as showing that Ezekiel was familiar with the history of Gen. ii. and iii. (compare the mention of Noah, in ch. xv. 14, 20). To him the King of Tyre seemed to claim a position like that of Adam before his fall, perfect in beauty and in wisdom, the lord of the creation. And in that fancied Eden he stood, so he thought, not like Adam, "naked and ashamed," but like one of the cherubim that guarded the gates of the primeval Paradise

(Gen. iii. 24), covered with all imaginable splendour. Ezekiel returns to the phrase in ch. xxxi. 8, 16, 18 and xxxvi. 35. Other instances meet us in Joel ii. 3 and Isa. li. 3. **Every precious stone.** All the stones named are found in the list of the gems on the high priest's breastplate (Exod. xxviii. 17—20; xxxix. 8—14). Three, however, of those gems are wanting—those in the third row of the breastplate—which are not named elsewhere; and the order is not the same. The LXX. makes the two lists identical, apparently correcting Ezekiel by Exodus. St. John (Rev. xxi. 19) reproduces his imagery in his vision of the foundation-stones of the new Jerusalem, but naturally returns to the fulness of the symbolic number—twelve. Possibly the description of gold and bdellium and onyx (or beryl), as in Gen. ii. 11, 12, may have suggested the thought that Eden was a land of jewels. **The workmanship of thy tabret and pipes**; better, *the service*. The Authorized Version and Revised Version follow Luther. Keil agrees as to "tabret" (so Gen. xxxi. 27; Isa. v. 12; elsewhere, as in Exod. xv. 20 and Job xxi. 12, the Authorized Version gives "timbrels"), but takes the latter word (not found elsewhere) as identical with its feminine form, and meaning "female." He sees in the clause, accordingly, a picture of the pomp of the Tyrian king, surrounded by the odalisques of the harem, who, with their timbrels, danced to his honour as their lord and king (comp. Isa. xxiii. 16; Exod. xv. 20; 1 Sam. xviii. 6). Hävernick, who agrees with Keil, calls attention to a passage in Athenæus (xii. 8. p. 531), in which Strato, a Sidonian king, is said to have prepared for a great festival by bringing girls who played on the flute and harp from all parts of Greece. Others, however (Smend), find in both the words articles of jewellery, pearls perforated or set in gold (as in Exod. xxviii. 20), and so see in them the conclusion of the description of the gorgeous apparel of the king. Fürst takes the words as meaning musical instruments that were of gold set with jewels. Ewald, following out the Urim and Thummim idea, takes the gems as the subject of the sentence, and translates, "they were for the work of thine oracles and divining." On the whole, the interpretation given above seems preferable. **In the day that thou wast created.** The words point to the time of the king's enthronement or coronation. It was then that he appeared in all his supreme magnificence. Had Ezekiel been a witness of that ceremony?

Ver. 14.—**The anointed cherub that covereth.** The word for "anointed" is not found elsewhere, but is cognate in form with that which is commonly so rendered. The Vulgate, however, tracing it to another root, gives *extentus et protegens*, and is followed by Luther, Gesenius, Ewald, and others. Keil and Hengstenberg accept "anointed." The sequence of thought seems to be as follows: The splendour of the King of Tyre had suggested the idea of Eden the garden of God. This, in its turn, led on to that of the cherub that was the warder of that garden (Gen. iii. 24). The Paradise of God is pictured as still existing, and the cherub—we remember how prominent the word and the thing had been in Ezekiel's thoughts (ch. i. 10; x. 1—16)—is there (according as we take the above words) either as its anointed, *i.e.* "consecrated," ruler, or as extending the protection of its overshadowing wings far and wide as the cherubim of the tabernacle extended their wings over the ark (comp. Exod. xxv. 20; xxxiii. 22; 1 Kings viii. 7). Those cherubim, we may remember, were actually anointed (Exod. xxx. 2, 6). The King of Tyre boasted that he was, like them, consecrated to his office as king "by the grace of God." In that earthly Paradise the prophet saw the "holy mountain of God," the Olympus, so to speak, of the Hebrews, the throne of the Eternal (compare the Meru of India, the Albard of Iran, the Asgard of German poetry). Isaiah's words as to the King of Babylon (xiv. 13, 14) present a suggestive parallel. **In the midst of the stones of fire.** The words receive their interpretation partly from Gen. iii. 24; partly from 2 Sam. xxii. 9, 13; Ps. xviii. 8, 12; cxx. 4. The cherub's sword of fire is identified with the lightning-flash, and that in its turn with the thunderbolts of God. Out of the throne of God went thunders and lightnings (Exod. xix. 16). The "Flammantia mœnia mundi" of Lucretius (I. 73) offers a suggestive parallel. The King of Tyre, like the King of Babylon (Isa. xiv. 13, 14), is painted as exulting in that attribute of the Divine glory.

Ver. 15.—**Thou wast perfect in thy ways.** The glory of the King of Tyre was, the prophet goes on to say, conditional. He began his reign in righteousness, but afterwards iniquity was found in him. And the root of that iniquity was the pride of wealth engendered by the greatness of his commerce (ver. 16). He was no longer like the cherub who guarded the Paradise of God, but like Adam when he was cast out from it. Wealth and pride had tempted him to violence and to wrong, and he was no longer an "anointed" or consecrated, but a profaned and desecrated, king. The, "stones of fire," the thunders and lightnings of the Divine Majesty, should no longer protect him.

Ver. 17.—**Thine heart was lifted up**, etc. In yet another point Ezekiel sees the fall of Adam reproduced in that of the Tyrian king. He had forfeited his beauty and his wisdom through the pride which sought for a yet greater glory by a false and counterfeit wisdom (Gen. iii. 6). **I will cast thee**, etc. The words are better taken, as in the Revised Version, in the past tense, *I have cast thee . . . I have laid thee before kings.* Pride was to have its fall, as in Isa. xxiii. 9. The very sanctuaries, the temples which made Tyre the "holy island," were defiled by the iniquities through which the wealth that adorned them had been gained. The "fire," instead of being a rampart of protection, should burst forth as from the centre of the sanctuary to destroy him. Is there an implied allusion to the fiery judgment that fell on Nadab and Abihu (Lev. x. 2) and on Korah and his company (Numb. xvi. 35)? The doom of *Sic transit gloria mundi* was already passed on her.

Ver. 19.—**Thou shalt be a terror**, etc. The knell of doom, as heard in ch. xxvii. 36, rings out again. The same judgment falls alike on the city and on its king.

The question when and in what manner the prediction received its fulfilment has been much discussed. Josephus ('Ant.,' x. 11. 1; 'Contra Apion,' i. 19) states that Nebuchadnezzar besieged the island Tyre and Ithobal (Ethbaal III.) for thirteen years; that, on his father's death, leaving his Phœnician and other captives to be brought by slower stages, he himself hastened to Babylon, and that afterwards he conquered the whole of Syria and Phœnicia; but he does not say, with all the Tyrian records before him, that the city was actually captured by him. It has been inferred, indeed, from ch. xxix. 18, that Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Tyre ended in, at least, partial failure, that he and his army had no "wages" for their work, *i.e.* that the spoil of the city was meagre and disappointing. Possibly the merchant-princes of the city had contrived to carry off part of their treasures in their ships. On the other hand, it may be noted (1) that the national historians of the ancient world (perhaps not of that only) willingly minimized the disasters of their country; and (2) that the Phœnician fragment quoted by Josephus ('Contra Apion,' i. 21) simply for synchronistic purposes, shows a significant change of government following on the siege. Ithobal was "king" during the thirteen years, but afterwards "judges" were appointed, and these ruled for periods of two, or three, or ten months. All this indicates a period of confusion and anarchy, the consequence of some great catastrophe. As a whole, too, we have to remember that it was with Tyre, as with Babylon and with other nations. The prophecies against them had "springing and germinant accomplishments." What the prophet saw in vision, as wrought out in a moment of time, was actually the outcome of the slow decay of centuries, and of catastrophes separated from each other by long intervals of a dwindling history. The main facts of that history may be briefly stated. There was, as implied in Isa. xxiii. 17, a revival of commerce under the Persian monarchy, and of this we have traces in Neh. xiii. 16. Two hundred and fifty years after Nebuchadnezzar, Tyre was still so strongly fortified that Alexander the Great did not take it till after a seven years' siege (Diod. Sic., xvii. 20; Arrian., ii. 17; Q. Curtius, iv. 2—4). It rose again into wealth and power under the Seleucidæ, and the Romans made it the capital of their province of Phœnicia. It appears as a flourishing town in Matt. xv. 21; Acts xii. 20; xxi. 37, and is described by Strabo (xvi. 2, 23) as having two harbours and lofty houses. From A.D. 636 to 1125 it was in the hands of the Saracens. Saladin attacked it without success in A.D. 1189. In A.D. 1291, after Acre had been taken by storm by El-Ashraf, Sultan of Egypt, Tyre passed into his hands without a struggle. When it again passed into the power of the Saracens, its fortifications were demolished, and from that time it sank gradually into its present obscurity. The present *Sûr* is a small town of narrow, crooked, and dirty streets, and the ruins of the old Phœnician city cover the suburbs to the extent of half a league round. The harbour is choked up with sand, and with remains of the old palaces and walls and temples, and is available for small boats only. The sea has swallowed up its grandeur. The soil on which the traveller stands is a mass of *débris*, in which marble, porphyry, and granite mingle with coarser stones. So it has come to pass that it is little more than "a place for the spreading of nets" and

that the sentence, "Thou shalt never be any more," seems to be receiving its fulfilment. There was for it no prospect of an earthly restoration, still less that of a transfigured and glorified existence like that which, in the prophet's visions, was connected with Jerusalem.

Ver. 21.—**Set thy face against Zidon.** The relation of this city to Tyre was one of sufficient independence to justify a separate oracle for the completeness of the prophet's arrangement of his messages (ch. xxvii. 8; Joel iii. 4; Jer. xxv. 22; Zech. ix. 2). It was sufficiently identified with it not to call for any long description. It is assumed that her sins were of the same kind and required a like punishment.

Ver. 22.—**I will be glorified in . . . thee.** The thought and the phrase come from Exod. xiv. 4; Lev. x. 3. Ezekiel reproduces it in ch. xxxix. 13. God is glorified, or, as in the next clause, **sanctified**, when his power and holiness are manifested in righteous judgment. (For "sanctified," see ch. xxxviii. 16; Numb. xx. 13.)

Ver. 23.—**Pestilence** was the natural accompaniment of a siege. As in ch. xiv. 19, **blood** probably points to death from this cause, as distinct from the slaughter threatened in the following clause.

Ver. 24.—**There shall be no more a pricking brier.** There is a special appropriateness in Ezekiel's imagery. The words had been used in Numb. xxxiii. 55 of the Canaanites at large (comp. Josh. xxii. 13). Ezekiel applies them to the cities which were the most conspicuous survivors of the old Canaanite races. Israel, he implies, had been wounded with those thorns and briers, had caught (as *e.g.* in the case of Jezebel) the taint of evil life and evil worship from those races; but for her there is, as in ver. 25, the future of restoration, and when that future comes, the Canaanite cities, with their idolatries and vices, should have passed away for ever.

Ver. 25.—**My servant Jacob.** The use of "Jacob" for "Israel" is not common in Ezekiel, but ch. xx. 5; xxvii. 25; xxxiv. 25 may be noted as parallels.

Ver. 26.—**Shall build houses, etc.** The words sound almost like a direct quotation from Jer. xxiii. 6 and xxxvi. 28; and, at all events, present a suggestive parallel. The restoration was to include also the blessing of confidence and hope; no longer a groundless and false confidence, like that of Jer. ii. 37 and xlviii. 13, but one resting on the fact that God was in very deed the Judge of all the earth.

We may note, at the close of the chapter, how its juxtaposition of the two Phœnician cities seems to have been present to the mind of the Christ in his references to the judgment that should come upon both of them (Matt. xi. 21; Luke x. 13). He himself, it will be remembered, passed through the coasts of Tyre and Zidon (Matt. xv. 21), and probably, according to the best text of Mark vii. 24, actually trod the streets of the latter city. They supplied some of the great multitude of Mark iii. 8, who listened to his teaching.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 2.—*A prince's sin.* I. GREAT RESPONSIBILITY IS ATTACHED TO HIGH OFFICE. In the two previous chapters the prophet denounced judgment on the city of Tyre, and lamented its approaching accomplishment. Now he turns to the ruler of the city, selecting him for an ugly pre-eminence of guilt. This man is entrusted with the weal of the city. If Tyre is doomed, a heavy share of the blame must lie at his door. It is a fearful thing to be responsible for the fate of so great and splendid a community. In the sight of God accountability is always measured by power. Heedless men grasp hastily at the reins of government, little considering how severe must be the judgment of Heaven if they abuse their great trust. It is no light thing to be in a position of influence over our fellow-men. We need, therefore, especially to pray for the souls of princes and governors. The ambition that craves their privileges might be restrained if people considered the terrible questions that they will have to answer when called upon to give an account of their stewardship.

II. PRIDE IS THE BESETTING SIN OF HIGH OFFICE. The Prince of Tyre exclaims, "I am a God, I sit in the seat of God." There are many temptations to this sin of pride. 1. *Power.* Holding high office necessarily confers great influence. The man in power may really be a weak person, but he has great resources at his command. Thus he is inclined to think too much of himself, and to transfer to the score of his merits what really only belongs to his position. 2. *Flattery.* The prince is not the only person

to blame. They are highly culpable who encourage him in a belief in his own greatness by their base adulation. All people in office need to beware of the honeyed words of those beneath them.

III. THE PRIDE OF HIGH OFFICE IS AN INSULT TO GOD. The prince compares himself to a god, and his throne to the seat of a god. This implies two evils. 1. *Godlessness.* Carrying out this notion in practice, the Prince of Tyre refuses to humble himself in the sight of Heaven. As all men bow to him, he is tempted to forget that he should look up to and bow before a higher Power. 2. *Rebellion against God.* The proud ruler usurps the place of God. He elects to become an earthly providence. He dispenses with any reference to the holy will of the Supreme, and sets up his own will as the highest authority.

IV. SIN IN HIGH OFFICE IS ESPECIALLY CULPABLE BECAUSE IT INVOLVES A MULTITUDE IN ITS EVIL EFFECTS. The effects are seen in its contagious influence and in its punishment. 1. *Its influence.* The bad ruler is like Jeroboam, whose awful climax of wickedness was seen in the fact that he "made Israel to sin" (1 Kings xv. 30). The power of a bad ruler is one that makes for wickedness. It sows seeds of sin broadcast. Society takes its fashion from the court, and then each order of the community from that next above it. It is a fearful thing to be the leader of a fashion of wickedness. 2. *Its punishment.* The ruler's sin brings misery on the nation. The people must reap the consequences of the misdeeds of their princes. Tyre's doom is the heavier because her prince is a bad man. Therefore (1) the people should look well to the characters of the men they put in office; (2) all persons in authority should dread the double guilt of bringing ruin on the multitude as well as wrecking their own lives.

Ver. 3.—"*Wiser than Daniel.*" I. THE TYPICAL WISDOM OF DANIEL. Evidently this wisdom was proverbial in the days of Ezekiel. The prophet implies that the fame of it had reached the province of Tyre. Consider its nature, its application, and its source. 1. *Its nature.* (1) Insight. Daniel was able to discern the meaning of mysteries that baffled the ingenuity of the most skilful of the magi. The greatest wisdom is required to penetrate beneath the surface. Foolish people are shallow; wisdom dives into depths of truth. (2) Foresight. Daniel had visions of the future. We speculate on the future; he saw it. 2. *Its application.* (1) To human affairs. Daniel's wisdom was not expended on abstract problems; he did not even use it for that interpretation of nature which, since the days of Bacon, has yielded us such rich results; he employed it in the consideration of what was most nearly concerned with man. Here wisdom is most practically valuable; but it is just here that the application of it is most difficult. (2) To large questions. Daniel did not spend his mind on little personal affairs. His vision swept empires. The highest wisdom is required for large public interests. 3. *Its source.* (1) Springing from Divine inspiration. Daniel was trained in Chaldean lore, but he did not find his wisdom in that school. It was derived from his religion. We must connect it with his fidelity. He who dared the lions' den rather than be unfaithful to God was rewarded with heavenly wisdom. True wisdom is from above (Jas. iii. 17). (2) Engaged in self-restraint. No doubt the simple living which Daniel chose in common with his three companions prepared him to receive light from God. Luxury and self-indulgence blind the eyes of the soul. Simplicity and self-restraint make a man most susceptible to the influences of Heaven.

II. THE MOCKERY OF WORLDLY WISDOM. The proud Prince of Tyre vainly pretends to excel this high wisdom of Daniel. 1. *Its nature.* It is "earthly, sensual, devilish" (Jas. iii. 15). The wisdom of the Prince of Tyre was seen in his successful management of the commercial affairs of his city. It did not touch the counsels of God; it had no bearing on the true welfare of the state; it gave no insight into the essentially corrupt condition of the city; it was entirely lacking in foresight of impending doom. But it was in a large measure successful in opening up new markets, favouring mercantile exchange, and generally promoting the trade interests of the community. This was its highest attainment. There are many people in the present day whose minds are entirely absorbed in similar subjects. They are keen men of business, and they imagine that their astuteness in making money is the height of wisdom. Flattered

by temporary success, they despise all other considerations as dreamy. The intelligence that makes money is with them true wisdom; all else is but so much wasted thinking. 2. *Its folly.* This wisdom, when held to be supreme, is really foolishness, because then it blinds men to the great facts of life and eternity. It is bad to throw dust in the eyes of people, even if this be gold-dust. The supposed wisdom of the Prince of Tyre was one element that contributed to his ruin, because it prevented him from seeing approaching danger, in the confidence of his worldly success. The wisdom of the world is foolishness when it comes as a veil between us and truths that we need to know. Thus the proudly wise may perish, while the foolish in this world are endowed with heavenly wisdom, especially that highest wisdom of the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. i. 24, 25).

Ver. 15.—*The innocence of early days.* I. THERE IS AN INNOCENCE OF EARLY DAYS. 1. *In the race.* The Bible represents Adam and Eve as commencing life in primitive innocence. However we may interpret the narrative in Genesis—as literal history or as allegory—if we attach any inspired authority to it we must see that it points back to a time when man lived in childlike innocence and ignorance of evil. 2. *In the nation.* Even Tyre, wicked, corrupt Tyre, had once known better days. Nearly every people has traditions of a good age preceding the later corruptions. We do not see that the heathen are advancing. On the other hand, behind idolatry there are often to be discovered shreds of an ancient faith in one spiritual God. Thus the Vedas show a purer religion and a higher thought than are to be found in modern Hinduism. We may believe that God is educating the world, and yet see that vast portions of it do not as yet respond to the uplifting influences. 3. *In the individual.* Children begin life in innocency. Though they come into the world with hereditary tendencies to evil, those tendencies are at first latent, and until they have received the consent of the will they cannot be accounted elements of guilt. Concerning little children our Lord said, "Of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark x. 14).

II. THIS PRIMITIVE INNOCENCE AGGRAVATES THE GUILT OF LATER YEARS. 1. *In the community.* Man was not created corrupt. He cannot lay the charge of his sin against his Maker. There has been a fall. Degeneracy is especially evil. To go from good to bad and from bad to worse in a descending scale of wickedness is to be without excuse in sin. 2. *In the individual.* The child who has never known goodness can scarcely be blamed for living a bad life. He can hardly be said to have chosen evil rather than good, for he has had no alternative set before him. But it is otherwise with one who has begun well. Israel is the more to blame because her goodness was like the morning cloud (Hos. vi. 4). The child of a Christian home is exceptionally wicked when he turns his back on the good influences of his early days, and deliberately descends into the lower paths of sin. There is this guilt with sin in some measure for all of us. For we have all turned aside. When the hardened sinner looks back on his child-days, when he remembers his simple, innocent life in the old home, when he sees his younger condition reflected in the frank countenance of some little child, he may well learn that his own self will be his accuser in the day of judgment.

III. THE INNOCENCE OF EARLY DAYS INSPIRES US WITH HOPES OF RESTORATION. Man is not naturally a brute. What he has been suggests what he may yet become. Absolute primitive innocence is indeed irrecoverably lost. The bloom of childhood can never be restored. Yet as Naaman's flesh became like the flesh of a little child after he had bathed seven times in the Jordan (2 Kings v. 14), it is possible to be converted, and become as a little child again (Matt. xviii. 3) in simplicity and a new purity of heart. This is the great Christian hope. The most abandoned sinner may, through Christ, be restored. He need not despair when he compares his present shame with his past innocence. The old fallen world may be recovered. The gospel of Christ goes forth to arrest the deepening degeneracy of mankind.

Vers. 20—23.—*The judgment of Zidon.* I. PARTNERS IN GUILT WILL BE PARTNERS IN DOOM. Tyre and Zidon were constantly associated together by reason of their nearness to one another, and their common interests and actions. Zidon followed Tyre in its degenerate course of wickedness. Thus, like Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Zidon were commonly named together as conjoined in an ugly pre-eminence of

wickedness (*e.g.* Luke x. 14). There is no security in such companionship. We gain nothing by following a multitude to do evil (Exod. xxiii. 2). When a large province rebels, there is more hope of immunity than when a few citizens behave seditiously, because the central government may not be strong enough to cope with the more serious disturbance. But in dealing with the Almighty such considerations do not apply. God can as easily destroy two cities as one. The number of sinners does not dilute the guilt of the separate individuals; it cannot mitigate their doom.

II. UNPROSPEROUS SINNERS WILL BE PUNISHED AS WELL AS PROSPEROUS ONES. Tyre was prosperous; Zidon was unprosperous. At least, the history of Zidon is that of a decline in influence compared with the growing importance of Tyre. The oldest and most prominent settlement of the Canaanites (Gen. x. 15), and the representative of the whole Canaanitish trade (Gen. xlix. 13), Zidon had gradually declined until it had become virtually, if not nominally, a dependence of Tyre. But though she reaped less earthly good from her wickedness, she did not therefore escape punishment. There is a superstitious notion that those people who suffer adversity on earth will be spared further punishment after death. But this notion is utterly without warrant, unless it can be proved that the last farthing is paid, and we can scarcely be bold enough to assert that anything of the kind has happened to the most unfortunate. Further, it is sometimes thought that failure exonerates. The evil deed is not carried out to perfection because the doer of it is hampered by external circumstances. This fact is no mitigation of his guilt. He would have consummated his wickedness had he been able to do so. Then he is guilty of the full completion of it, for the sin lies in the intention. Lastly, it is perhaps secretly thought that obscurity will hide from judgment. It was not so with Zidon. God sees all.

III. GOD IS CONCERNED WITH WHAT WE REGARD AS SECONDARY IN IMPORTANCE. He even gets glory through his just treatment of such a second-rate place as Zidon. God is too great to need to confine his attention to what is only of primary importance. As this is true of judgment, so it is also true of redemption. God does not only get glory through "pestilence and blood." His highest glory is seen in the redemption of the world. This redemption is not only for the great and notable. Second-rate characters are not beneath the attention of Christ. His salvation is for all—for the obscure, the neglected, the unfortunate.

Ver. 25.—*The home-gathering.* It is a relief to turn from repeated threatenings of approaching doom to the voice of gracious promises. We have here a gleam of sunshine breaking for a moment through the clouds of judgment. As there was light in the land of Goshen while a plague of darkness fell on the rest of Egypt (Exod. x. 23), so now the Jews are to be blessed when every neighbouring nation lies in ruins. The home-gathering of the Jews is their great expected blessing, which stands out in strong contrast with the hopeless desolation of the heathen. A wider Christian vision will desire to see in this a type of that great spiritual restoration which is for all the people of God, and for all who are willing to become his people, even though they now belong to lost heathen races. A Jewish prophet predicted this wider and more glorious future (Isa. xix. 25).

I. THE FRUIT OF DIVINE REDEMPTION IS A GREAT HOME-GATHERING. It was so physically with Israel; it is so spiritually with Christians. 1. *Sin scatters.* It drives men from God, banishes them from their old privileges, breaks up the brotherhood of fellow-men, and destroys the true family spirit. All evil is a solvent of society. 2. *Christ restores.* (1) To God. The first departure was from God. Where the parent is, there is the home. We leave our home in leaving God; in restoration we first come back to God. The first great result of it is a return of the soul to communion with God. (2) To the home. Israel is restored to Palestine, the land flowing with milk and honey. The redeemed are now restored to what is better than Canaan even in its palmy days—to the kingdom of heaven brought down to the earth. Here the Christian may eat of the tree of life and drink of the river of water of life. Here no pricking briars may grow. (3) To Christian fellowship. The home is the abode of the family. By redemption Christ heals enmity, destroys selfishness, inspires sympathy, draws and binds souls together. This is the earthly blessedness of the Divine recovery.

II. THIS GREAT HOME-GATHERING IS FOR THE GLORY OF GOD. God was to be glorified in the punishment of the wicked (ver. 22). But he gains a fresh glory from redemption. When Israel is restored God "shall be sanctified in them in the sight of the heathen." The holiness of God will then be made apparent to the world. The restoration of Israel reveals the power and goodness of God, and shows how he cares for and saves the people who acknowledge him. In a much higher way the redemption of the world sanctifies God by revealing his holiness. 1. *It shows his power over sin.* He restrains the wicked, that those who obey his Word may have freedom to do so. 2. *It shows his recovering grace.* The Jews had sinned and had been banished as a punishment for their wickedness, in which they resembled the heathen. But they were penitent, and, being pardoned, they were also restored. There is greater glory in redemption than in retribution. If God conquers sin, not by destroying the sinner, but by converting him, God's holiness is most fully glorified. There is nothing on earth that so sanctifies God, by revealing him in separate, supreme goodness, as the triumphs of the gospel. Nebuchadnezzar glorified God, but Cyrus more so. God was glorified in the destruction of Jerusalem; he was more glorified in the preaching of St. Paul.

Ver. 26.—*Confidence.* I. CHRISTIANS MAY ENJOY CONFIDENCE. This is named as part of the blessedness of the restoration: "Yea, they shall dwell with confidence." Confidence is good on many accounts. 1. *It glorifies God.* To be for ever doubting, questioning, and fearing shows an unworthy want of appreciation of God's glorious redemption. We honour God by taking him at his word, and quietly trusting in his grace. 2. *It confers peace on the soul.* We can possess our souls in quietness when we have confidence. Diffidence keeps up a sense of perpetual unrest. 3. *It inspires energy.* "They shall build houses, and plant vineyards." So long as the restored Jews expected to be surprised at any moment by their foes and driven away again from their homes, they would not have much heart to build up the walls of Zion. Tents are sufficient for sojourners. Confidence, however, will give a motive for laying good foundations and building solid structures. The confident Church will launch out in daring enterprises, or carry on long patient toil in sure expectation of enduring results. 4. *It gives leisure for service.* The distrustful workmen must carry the sword as well as the trowel, and thus be hampered in their work. Confidence dismisses fear of danger. The confident servant of God may give himself wholly to his Master's work. 5. *It wins others to confidence.* Timorous Christians will make but few converts, but one person's confidence infuses a corresponding confidence in others.

II. TRUE CONFIDENCE IS BASED ON SAFETY. Confidence is a feeling; safety is a fact. The one is only justified by the other. Confidence without security is mere bravado. There is no security in the bare sense of safety. Thus often they are most confident who have least reason to be so. The first inquiry is as to facts, not feelings. If we lack confidence our business is not to endeavour to stimulate it, to lull fear with spiritual opiates, or to rouse assurance with spiritual intoxicants. Such conduct is as foolish as it is dangerous. The right course is to look into the question of the justification of confidence. If we want to know whether the house will stand, let us have its foundations examined. When we can be assured of safety, confidence will be a natural result.

III. THE SAFETY ON WHICH TRUE CONFIDENCE IS BASED IS ACCOMPLISHED BY THE REDEEMING WORK OF GOD. The Jews were to dwell in confidence when God had destroyed the power of their enemies. Thus they were to "despise them round about them." It is shown in the Old Testament as well as the New that the sources of confidence as well as the grounds of safety are not to be found in man. We are not to be confident nor to count ourselves safe because of anything we have done, or because of our assurance of our own strength and resources. Our confidence is in God; therefore the feeblest souls may be confident, as the weakest of men may be quite safe within a strong fortress. Judgment reveals God to the wicked. Thus Zidon knows that God is the Lord (ver. 22). Redemption reveals him still more to his people, to those who trust and acknowledge him. They will be confident when they are brought by the gracious goodness of the Lord to know him by experience as indeed "their God."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—*The height of arrogance.* In addressing the Prince of Tyre, the prophet is in reality dealing with what may be called the national spirit pervading the proud and mighty city—a spirit regarded as embodying itself in the person of the chief ruler. The claim made by Tyre, and disputed by the prophet, is a claim to virtual divinity. Exalted above other cities, Tyre deems itself superior to human infirmity and to human fortune. This attitude God resents; and his representative here declares it to be the deep-seated and ultimate reason and cause of Tyre's approaching overthrow and destruction.

I. THE GROUND OF THIS ARROGANT CLAIM. 1. There is on the part of Tyre an assumption of extraordinary wisdom, superior to that of Daniel, a wisdom from which no secret can be hidden. 2. By the exercise of this singular wisdom and understanding, the city has devised means, such as the enterprise of its merchants, by which it has accumulated riches, and has filled its treasuries with store of gold and silver and all the conveniences and luxuries which wealth can purchase. 3. The eminent position among the nations which Tyre has thus attained, the honour accorded to it, its weight in political relations, have so lifted up its heart that it claims to be a god, and to sit in the seat of God. By this must be understood a claim and assumption to be superior to the need of any Divine care or protection, to be independent of all assistance of any kind, to be secure against the assault of any foe, and even against the mutability characteristic of the human lot. This is arrogance beyond what is to be found even in the wisest and the greatest of mankind.

II. THE VANITY AND FOLLY OF THIS ARROGANT CLAIM. A state is a human institution; and although it undoubtedly embodies the Divine idea and principle of authority requiring submission, although there is such a thing as national character and national life, still every earthly and human institution, beginning in time, ends in time, and participates in human weakness and ignorance. They who claim deity for aught earthly cannot understand what Deity is, how it is creative and not created, eternal and not transitory, immutable and not shifting, perfect and not subject to development and dissolution. To know one's self is true wisdom; he who forgets or disclaims his humanity is the subject of illusion, and illusion which must be speedily and irretrievably dispelled.

III. THE SINFULNESS OF THIS ARROGANT CLAIM. The assumption of Tyre is rebuked and censured, not as a violation of good taste, not as an insult to other nations, but as a defiance of the Lord of all. To claim unfailing wisdom and irresistible power is to assume the attributes, to aspire to the throne, of the Eternal. Pride has been reckoned as one of the seven deadly sins. It is indeed pernicious in its effect upon the character of those who suffer it to take possession of their being and to control the habits of their life. It is offensive and injurious in its influence upon human society. But primarily it is a sin against God—the placing of the creature in that supreme position which is God's of right, and God's alone.

IV. THE DISPROOF OF THIS ARROGANT CLAIM. Events occur which dispel human illusions, confound human vanity, and unmask human pretensions. In the days of its prosperity and power, men, ever ready to flatter and to worship the great, were too ready to concede the extravagant and monstrous claims Tyre advanced. But the time of trial comes, and their baselessness and absurdity are exposed. Evils which a Divine power would avert prove able to assault and master the pretentious and self-confident. The one great lesson of human history is this—man is but man, and not God.

V. THE PUNISHMENT OF THIS ARROGANT CLAIM. In the zenith of its prosperity, the acme of its power, Tyre is confronted by a force mightier than its own. The agency is the king and army of Babylon; but the great Actor in the awful scenes which transpire is none other than the Eternal himself. The forces of Tyre are defeated, the fleets of Tyre destroyed, the walls of Tyre razed, the wealth of Tyre dispersed, the city of Tyre itself demolished. "Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee." Here is something more than disproof; here is reversal, refutation, annihilation. Pride is humbled to the dust; and the proud are scattered and are no more.—T.

Vers. 3—10.—*The folly of worldly wisdom.* It might not have occurred to an ordinary observer that Tyre owed its position to its wisdom, and its downfall to an unwise confidence in that wisdom. But the Prophet Ezekiel looked below the surface, and traced the arrogance and presumptuous ungodliness of the great city to its claim to worldly prudence, sagacity, and skill, which, being substituted for true and Divine wisdom, became the occasion of the city's downfall and destruction.

I. THE RANGE AND REALITY OF WORLDLY WISDOM. It has respect to earthly good, prescribing means by which health of body, riches and luxuries, worldly honour, etc., may be attained. It bounds its regards by the horizon of earth and time. It employs instrumentalities which experience approves as efficacious. It takes counsel of the prosperous and the honoured. It pursues patiently and persistently aims which are mundane and which are within human reach, wasting no time (as it would say) upon ethereal sentiment, imaginary and ideal perfection, Utopian schemes.

II. THE FRUIT OF THIS WISDOM. The case of Tyre is to the point. The understanding and skill for which the Tyrian merchants and mariners were noted were not employed in vain. Success was their attestation and approval. Uncertainty is indeed distinctive of all human endeavour and undertaking. But a large measure of success may fairly be reckoned upon as likely to be secured by the use of means devised by the wisdom of this world. As a man soweth, so does he reap.

III. THE BOAST OF THIS WISDOM. Tyre claimed to be wiser than Daniel, and to be able to penetrate all secrets. There are those who would think it vulgar and contemptible to boast of their birth, their wealth, their honours, who, however, are not above boasting of their insight, sagacity, and prudence. They would never have fallen into errors which misled their neighbours! They would have known how to deal with such a person, how to contend with such difficulties, how to adapt themselves to such circumstances! Trust them to find their way, however intricate its windings!

IV. THE TRIAL OF THIS WISDOM. It is admitted that, in ordinary circumstances and times, worldly wisdom is sufficient to preserve a man and a nation from calamities, to secure to them many and real advantages. But every true student of human nature and human history is aware that times of exceptional probation and difficulty have to be encountered. It is so in the life of every man, it is so in the history of every people. The principles which served well enough before are useless now. The men of the world are at a loss, and know not whither to turn. The crisis has come: how shall it be met?

V. THE VANITY OF THIS WISDOM. Mere cleverness and fox-like keenness, mere experience upon the low level of expediency, are proved in times of trial to be altogether worthless. Deeply rooted convictions of Divine truth, and habits of reverential conformity to laws of Divine righteousness, "the fear of the Lord" (in the language of Scripture),—such are true wisdom. Anything short of this must issue in disappointment and powerlessness. Human expediencies may carry us a long way, but a point is reached where they fail, and where their worthlessness is made apparent. Such a point was reached in the history of Tyre, when it was found that wealth could not buy off the hostility of Babylon, and that mercenaries could not resist Babylonian arms or policy overcome Babylonian persistence.

VI. THE OVERTHROW AND CONFUSION OF THIS WISDOM. The language of the prophet upon this is singular and suggestive: "I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations; and they shall draw their swords against *the beauty of thy wisdom*, and they shall defile thy brightness." The wisdom in which the Tyrians trusted, and which excited the admiration of their neighbours and rivals, could not withstand the attack of Oriental soldiery and tactics. It was boasted in days of prosperity; but in the day of adversity its strength was small.

VII. THE DISCREDITING AND CONTEMPT OF THIS WISDOM. There are times when professions are accepted as valid and trustworthy; but there are also times when professions are of no avail, and when solid facts and realities alone will abide. As in the case of Tyre, the wisdom which is weighed in the balances and is found wanting is utterly discredited. Men despise what formerly they praised. Such is the fate to which the wisdom of the worldly wise is doomed. "It is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent will I reject. . . . Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"—T.

Ver. 16.—*Sin and destruction.* No doubt the inspired prophet of the Lord saw in the fate of Tyre what was not discernible to worldly and enlightened minds. These would look for political causes and motives and consequences in the rise and fall of states. But Ezekiel saw below the surface. He knew that there was Divine action in and beneath the action of Tyre's enemies; and that there were reasons only recognizable by a reflecting and religious man for the awful disasters which he was commissioned to foretell.

I. THE OCCASIONS OF SIN. 1. We may discover what may be called *material* occasions of sin, in the wealth and prosperity, the fame and renown, the beauty and splendour, of Tyre. Circumstances of very different kinds may yet agree in suggesting evil thoughts, desires, and habits. Men lay the blame upon circumstances, but this is a very short-sighted method of proceeding. 2. There are *moral* promptings to sin which may spring out of the former. The heart is lifted up with exultation; a not unnatural confidence in possessions and resources springs up and asserts itself.

II. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF SIN. "Thou hast sinned" is the reproach addressed by God to the guilty city; and it is the reproach addressed to every nation and to every man that has yielded to temptations which should have been withstood, repelled, and mastered. The forms which sin assumes are innumerable, and vary with varying times and with varying states of society. The context refers to: 1. Iniquity, or the violation of Divine laws regulating men's relations among themselves and to God himself. 2. Violence, such as the powerful, wilful, and haughty are given to exercise in their treatment of their inferiors. 3. Corruption and defilement, such as are certain to prevail where God is not honoured, and where selfish ends inspire men's conduct.

III. THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN. This is: 1. By the decree of God. He is the Speaker throughout this passage. He claims to bestow privileges, and to call men to account for the manner in which those privileges are used. Whatever be the agency or instrumentality of chastisement and correction, it is by the Eternal Wisdom and Righteousness that it is inflicted. 2. In the case of national sin, the penalties are put in force through the instrumentality of neighbouring nations. A barbarian horde, or a mighty sovereign and conqueror, has again and again been used as a "scourge of God." It would be wrong to attribute any moral superiority to the victorious people; they may be merely the rod, the sword, in the hand of the Lord of hosts. 3. Where the offence has been heinous, the visitation may be one involving complete destruction, as in the case of Tyre. The terms of threatening here recorded are of the strongest and most unsparing. "I will destroy thee;" "I will cast thee to the ground;" "I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee; it shall devour thee." Such punishment is sometimes regarded as inconsistent with the attributes of a just and merciful King and Judge. But, whilst it may not be in our power to vindicate all the ways of God, it is certainly not for us to question the acts of him who is omniscient, and whose righteousness is without a flaw. There is nothing in Scripture to support the opinions of those who think that, because God is benevolent, therefore there is no such thing as punishment. There is a moral law which the Sovereign Judge will surely maintain and vindicate. 4. The punishment inflicted upon sinners shall be published far and wide. What is done by God in the exercise of punitive justice is done in the sight of all, and all shall be astonished. This publicity may surely be explained as an arrangement intended for the universal good—to impress upon the minds of all mankind the heinousness of iniquity, that they may "stand in awe, and sin not."—T.

Vers. 25, 26.—*The favour shown to Israel.* In the writings of Ezekiel, as in those of other prophets, we cannot but observe the remarkable conjunction of passages denouncing judgment with passages revealing Divine grace and promising Divine clemency. The attentive reader cannot but be surprised and charmed upon meeting with such a promise as is contained in these two verses, coming in between the denunciation of Tyre and the denunciation of Egypt. Undoubtedly, the fate of surrounding nations had relation to the history and prospects of Israel, though it would be presumption in us to define those relations too exactly. It was not a mere rhetorical art which led to the introduction of this portion of the prophecies just in this place. Yet we feel that its position both enhances its beauty and deepens its interest and significance.

I. THE FAVOUR TO BE SHOWN TO ISRAEL IS IN CONTRAST TO THE FATE OF OTHER NATIONS. Tyre should perish from off the earth; Egypt should be trodden underfoot, and should be degraded in the scale of nations; but Israel should dwell in their own land with confidence.

II. THE FAVOUR SHOWN TO ISRAEL IS CONSEQUENT UPON ISRAEL'S DEPRESSION, CONQUEST, AND CAPTIVITY. It is not to be supposed that Israel, because the chosen nation, was exempt from calamity and discipline. On the contrary, it was because, to some extent, the discipline was answering its intended purpose, that brightness followed the storm, that the winter of Israel's discontent was succeeded by the genial and happy spring-time.

III. THE FAVOUR SHOWN TO ISRAEL WAS, HOWEVER, UNDESERVED BY ISRAEL'S OWN CHARACTER AND ACTION. So it had been from the beginning. Israel was a rebellious and stiff-necked people, lapsing now into idolatry and again into murmuring or licentiousness. God had a purpose in Israel's election, and that purpose must needs be carried out. But in any case, it was no virtue, excellence, or merit in Israel that accounted for the forbearance continually and repeatedly extended towards the people of the covenant.

IV. THE FAVOUR SHOWN TO ISRAEL WAS OWING TO THE CLEMENCY OF THE DIVINE RULER. Why such clemency was extended to Israel, and was withheld from Tyre, it may not be possible for us to explain. But there is no caprice in the government of God; justice and mercy are his attributes, and it would be folly in man to impugn them. Who is there who is not indebted to Divine long-suffering and loving-kindness? What nation has not been spared and delivered from its enemies, once and again in the course of its history? Certainly, the mercy of the God of Abraham towards the people that sprang from the father of the faithful was great and marvellous.

V. THE FAVOUR SHOWN TO ISRAEL WAS MANIFEST IN THE DELIVERANCE OF THE PEOPLE FROM CAPTIVITY AND EXILE. They were "gathered from the people among whom they were scattered." Instead of being reduced to perpetual bondage or absorbed by their conquerors, the Hebrew people, though appointed to exile, were in due time redeemed from their subjection, dependence, and expatriation.

VI. THE FAVOUR SHOWN TO ISRAEL WAS MANIFEST IN THEIR PEACEFUL RE-ESTABLISHMENT IN THEIR OWN LAND. It was the land given by Jehovah to his servant Jacob, the land of promise, the land of the covenant. God had his own wise purposes to work out by this replanting and resettling of the people of Israel upon the sacred soil. There it was appointed for them to dwell in safety and confidence, to build their houses and to plant their vineyards, and above all to worship the God of their fathers in his chosen sanctuary.

VII. THE FAVOUR SHOWN TO ISRAEL WAS INTENDED TO AWAKEN THE ACKNOWLEDGMENTS OF GRATEFUL PIETY. The services and their motives may not always have been spiritual and pure, free from every taint of selfishness and self-satisfaction. The Israelites, thinking of the judgments God had executed upon all those who had despised them round about them, congratulating themselves that, whilst their foes had been humiliated or destroyed, they had been spared, restored, and blessed, may, perhaps, have allowed some feelings of self-righteousness to take possession of their hearts. Yet they could not fail to acknowledge Jehovah as their true Friend and mighty Deliverer; they could not but offer grateful sacrifices of adoring praise to him who had remembered them in their low estate; for his mercy endureth for ever. They could not but know and confess him as the Lord their God.—T.

Vers. 1—10.—*Pride's terrible fall.* A real king incorporates in himself all that is best and mightiest in the people. The aims, and enterprises, and ambitions, and spirit of the nation should find a place in his breast. He is a mirror, in which the life of the empire is reflected. Whether he leads or whether he follows the bent of the nation's will (and, in part, he will do both), he becomes the visible exponent of the nation's life. All that is good in the empire, and all that is evil, blossoms in him. Hence this message.

I. SUPERIOR WISDOM LEADS TO SUCCESS IN COMMERCE. "With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches." So far, no sin was committed. It is God's will that the rocks of earth should disclose their treasures of silver

and gold. It is God's will that the nations of the earth should interchange their products. The wisdom requisite for enterprise and commerce God himself gives. "Say not in thine heart, My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth; but thou shalt remember the Lord thy God, for he it is who giveth thee power to get wealth." Far-reaching sagacity, careful plan, prudent thrift, and bold adventure bring stores of wealth. "The hand of the diligent maketh rich."

II. COMMERCIAL SUCCESS LEADS TO STATE MAGNIFICENCE. More or less in every human breast there is a hunger for dignity, luxury, magnificent display. As soon as means are forthcoming this hunger will satiate itself. Nor is it merely a matter of personal satisfaction. It lends importance to the man; it lends importance to the state; it impresses other people—other nations—with a sense of superiority. It obtains homage and deference from men, and this is delicious. How otherwise can wealth be expended? The king cannot consume more food, unless it be to his injury. Expenditure on dress soon reaches its utmost limit. Therefore wealth can find outlets only on palatial buildings, pompous equipages, and martial defences.

III. STATE MAGNIFICENCE BREEDS A SPIRIT OF VAIN ASSUMPTION. The tendency of all material possession is to foster a feeling of self-importance. The adulation of others strengthens this feeling. Every addition of influence or power contributes to this inward vanity. In proportion to a king's poverty of mind will he over-estimate his importance. He looks upon his granite ramparts and upon his vast armaments, and imagines himself unconquerable. All other monarchs flatter him. He is easily cajoled into the belief that he possesses a clear superiority among men—yea, positive supremacy. He conceives that he is cast in a mould unlike that of mortals—that he is deathless and divine. He demands honours which belong to God alone. Instead of making his perilous position secure by the ramparts of God's friendship, he makes God an enemy.

IV. PROFANE ASSUMPTION IS DESTINED TO A TERRIBLE REVERSE. "Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers." A castle built without foundation is sure, sooner or later, to fall. In proportion to the loftiness of the erection will, in such a case, be the greatness of the catastrophe. Instead of being secure and permanent as God, he will find himself vulnerable as a man, frail as a flower at noonday. The spears of those he had despised will pierce his flesh as they would the flesh of another man; and when another king—the king of terrors—riding furiously on his pale horse, shall confront him, his heart will be the victim of such remorse and shame as other mortals have never known. Better far not to be lifted up than to be lifted up and then cast down. The momentum of a body falling from a dizzy height is terrible: what is the momentum of a lost soul?

V. GOD'S WORD IS MIGHTIER THAN ALL HUMAN RESOURCES. "I have spoken it, saith the Lord God." In the largest sense it is true that we cannot go against the word of the Lord. God's word is the forthputting of his thought, purpose, will. It is omnipotent resolve interpreted into speech. "He spake, and it was done." A word becomes a world. A breath of God sweeps the earth like a tornado. A promise is a ladder by which we can climb to the skies; it is a ship that will bear us away safely to the eternal haven. One word of God is a feast that will nourish the life of our soul for ages. It is a refuge in which we may securely hide. Jehovah's word is a rampart, from behind which we may calmly defy ten thousand foes. It is a wall of fire that never has been broken through. That word is more worth than all bankers' coffers—than all Californian mines. It is a title-deed to immortality and to heaven.—D.

Vers. 11—19.—*The glory and shame of Eden reproduced.* There is no reason why we should not regard the biblical narrative of Adam's trial and fall as fact and as allegory also. There is no real discrepancy between these two principles of interpretation. We are bound to accept it as a narrative of historical fact. Yet it is also an outline picture of every man's history. In each man's case there is the Edenic period of innocence, there is the crisis of first temptation, there is the fall, and then the banishment from Edenic joy. The circumstances of the first probation are more clearly and vividly reproduced in the case of a young prince than in any other. Hence the application to the King of Tyre.

I. THE KING CONSIDERED AS THE IDEAL MAN. Adam was placed in Eden as a monarch. He was placed in dominion over all creatures in earth, or air, or sea. This

gave him a great "coign of vantage." In this respect he was made after the pattern of God—he was God-like. All that ministered to his needs was within his reach. Not a thing was denied to him that could meet a want or satisfy a just desire. His home was stored with every form of beauteous vegetation and with every kind of precious gem. And he was priest as well as king. He had access to God at all times. In him creation was summed up. In a similar position was the King of Tyrus placed. All material good was within his reach. There was no temptation to acquire wealth by unlawful means. Tyre and its possessions were to him as a garden, over which he could roam at large. He stood towards men in the stead of God—the dispenser of truth and justice. He was gifted with robust health and with abundant wisdom. He had all that heart could wish. He was placed in an Eden of abundance—"in Eden, the garden of God." Like Adam, he was on his trial.

II. THE TEMPTATION. To every man temptation comes. If his heart be not set upon the acquisition of spiritual riches—wisdom, holiness, and love—he will desire inordinately the lower good, and will break through lawful restraints in order to possess it. This is the core and essence of temptation. In this way the King of Tyre was tested. He was set up by God to exemplify righteousness, and to administer justice among the people. Nor among his own subjects only, but from his high position—"the mountain of God"—he could have disseminated righteous principles among all the nations with whom Tyre traded. Yet in this respect the king egregiously failed. His love of gain was too great—was excessive. It overmastered his love of righteousness. What advantage he could not gain by fair and legitimate methods he extorted by violence. This is clear from ver. 16, "By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence." If the king personally was not the prime instigator of these deeds, he connived at them through unprincipled or corrupt judges. His prosperity and glory made him vain and arrogant. Temptation came to pluck the forbidden fruit, and the king weakly yielded.

III. THE CRIME. The crime was selfishness, covetousness, avarice. This favoured and fortunate man was placed in the possession of abundance. There was one thing he might *not* do. He might not rob others to enrich himself. The possessions of the foreigner ought to have been as much respected and protected as his own. But the devil whispered in his ear counsels of unrighteous enrichment, and he listened, wavered, succumbed. "Iniquity was found in thee." "Thou hast corrupted thy wisdom;" *i.e.* thou hast twisted it into cunning and craftiness. "Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffic." He had imagined that no higher power than himself would supervise his deeds. "God is not observant of such things," said his wily tempter. "Thou shalt not surely die." This was his crime. His very brightness—his prosperity—brought him into scenes of new temptation. He might have blessed mankind; but he was set on selfish ends. He was in indecent haste to aggrandize self. He trampled on others' rights, on law and order, that he might swell his self-importance. He chafed against the idea that he, a king, was only a subject to a higher sceptre. He would brook no interference with his proud will. This was his crime.

IV. THE BANISHMENT. "I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God. . . . I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee." The exclusion from Eden is here repeated. The changes of fortune through which Adam passed, every one, in a measure, passes through also. "I will bring forth a fire from the midst of thee." No heavier punishment can be passed upon a man than banishment from God's favour. Where God is, there is safety; where God is not, there is ruin. Where God is, there is heaven; where he is not, there is hell. To be forsaken of God—this is despair and woe. God departed from Saul, and straightway he began to descend the slippery plane that landed him in destruction. Appearances are very delusive. The eye is easily deceived. Beneath a fair exterior of prosperity there is often incipient decay, yea, corruption hastening to final ruin. "Pride goeth before a fall." If we have made God our foe, not all the alliances and intrigues in the universe can save us from destruction.—D.

Vers. 1—10.—*The course and doom of arrogance.* This prophecy is directed against "the Prince [or, 'King'] of Tyre" (ver. 1), and was doubtless meant for him particularly;

but it may be taken that he was representative of his court and of his people, and that the denunciation and doom here recorded apply to the state as well as to its head. We have suggested to us the course as well as the doom of arrogance.

I. IT BEGINS IN A DANGEROUS AND IRREVERENT COMPLACENCY. The consciousness of power or of priority is found to be a pleasant thing, and it *need* not be any wise associated with evil. It is often the gift of God; it is often the result of such natural advantages as Tyre possessed. It may give a pure and honest joy to the heart; and when it leads to gratitude and ends in blessing, it is good in every light and at every turn. But when, as is only too often the case, it gives rise to an unwholesome complacency of spirit, which ascribes too much to its own sagacity and too little to the Divine favour, then it stands on perilous ground (vers. 4, 5). Indeed, it has already begun to depart from the highway of wisdom and goodness; for this is not the spirit of godliness, but of irreverence.

II. IT PASSES ON TO A WEAK AND FOOLISH EXAGGERATION. Its heart is "lifted up" (ver. 2). It magnifies its own capacities, its own virtues, its own achievements. It conceals its own errors, defects, misdoings, so that they are not visible to its own eyes. It thinks much "more highly of itself than it ought to think," and supposes itself capable of accomplishing that to which it is wholly unequal. It thinks itself a Daniel (ver. 3) when it is not.

III. IT ENDS IN IMPIOUS PRESUMPTION. It says, "I am a god, I sit in the seat of God" (ver. 2). There have been many men and there have been some "world-powers" —Babylon, Macedon, Rome, Spain—who (which) have arrogated to themselves an authority and a power little (if any) short of the Divine. They have believed themselves able to act as a Divine providence, determining who or what should be raised up or cast down, supposing that their will could be impressed upon the institutions, or the peoples, or the Churches of their age. They have claimed a homage and assumed a function which belong to none but the Most High himself. Thus human arrogance places on its own haughty head the crown of a daring and impious assumption.

IV. IT BRINGS UPON ITSELF THE SEVERE CONDEMNATION OF GOD. (Text; see 2 Sam. xxii. 28; Isa. ii. 11; Dan. iv. 37; Luke i. 51; Jas. iv. 6.)

V. IT IS DOOMED TO DESTRUCTION. (Vers. 6, 10.) The strong terms of the text speak of: 1. The decisive and successful antagonism of those who have been despised, but who prove to be "terrible" and victorious (ver. 7, former part). 2. The loss of all that has been most prized (ver. 7, latter part). 3. Uttermost ruin (ver. 8). And this is the fate of the haughty-hearted. They suffer the most mortifying humiliation in the discovery to themselves, and exposure to others of their false pretensions; the loss of their high position and forfeiture of all that they once held in so tight a grasp; the ruin, material or moral, which is fitly described as "death." They "go down to the pit." Let us learn: 1. To guard our power and our success by cultivating the spirit of humility and of gratitude. 2. To gain the approval of our Lord by employing our position and our privilege to bless our neighbours, so that we may win his smile and not suffer his reproach. 3. To humble our heart, if it should be lifted up, that we may gain God's mercy and not endure the penalty of our sin.—C.

Vers. 11—19.—*The insufficiency of circumstance, etc.* However we may interpret this imaginative passage (see Exposition), there are certain truths which are not only clear, but even brilliant to our sight as we regard it.

I. THE INSUFFICIENCY OF FAVOURABLE CIRCUMSTANCE. The Prince of Tyre was under such fortunate and enviable conditions that he is drawn by the prophet as a man who dwelt in the garden of Eden, in a perfect paradise; as one clothed with garments that shone with all precious stones; as one who was admitted, like the cherubim of the most holy place, to the very near presence of God; as one that stood, with the illustrious leader of Israel, on the sacred mount, and that saw, with him, the splendour of the Divine manifestation (vers. 13, 14). Nothing was wanting that the craving heart of man could desire; he "sealed up the sum," or he "sealed completeness" (Fairbairn) (ver. 12). He was "perfect in his ways" (ver. 15); *i.e.* not perfect in the ways of wisdom and worth, but of pleasure and honour and privilege. He lacked nothing that would lend beauty or grandeur or delight to human life. But what availed it all without righteousness? No barrier of rocky walls or of surrounding sea would keep out the

enemy when unrighteousness had bred corruption (ver. 15), and corruption had ended in weakness and downfall. No wealth of favouring circumstance, no multiplication of earthly good, even though a man should have (as this king is imagined to have) the choicest advantages of different generations, will secure lasting good; that is only to be gained by righteousness, by a strong and virtuous character, by steadfast piety.

II. THE PERIL OF GREAT EXALTATION. "He that is down need fear no fall;" but he that is exalted may suffer a terrible humiliation—he may be cast out (or down) from the mountain on which he stood (vers. 16, 17); he, the overshadowing cherub, may be ejected from the holy place, from the innermost chamber of sacred privilege, and be cast forth among the unholy (ver. 16). Let those who are exalted beware, for there is an abasement possible to them of which the unprivileged have no need to be afraid. And they have no other security than in a humble heart, an obedient spirit, a life of integrity and devotion.

III. THE PENALTY OF PROFANATION. Tyre had "corrupted its wisdom" (ver. 17); had "profaned its sanctuaries" (ver. 18). Its traffic should have been, as it might have been, carried on in honesty and equity; but it had been depraved, it had become lawless and dishonest; its streets, that should have been the highways of peaceful industry and happy fellowship, had became the places of violence and iniquity (vers. 18 and 16). That which was intended for the practice and illustration of virtue and excellence had become the scene and source of wrong and guilt. Therefore the righteous Judge would "profane" it (ver. 16; Fairbairn), would "cast it out as profane" (Authorized Version); the fires of retribution would devour it (ver. 18); its sad and shameful end would excite the awe and even the terror of the beholder (ver. 19). Profanation means penalty. If we do wrong to that human *spirit* of ours which comes to us from God, and in which we may closely resemble him; if we defile that human *body* in which the Son of God himself was once clothed, and which should be the very sanctuary or temple of the Divine; if we profane that human *life* of ours which should be so sacred in our sight and may be so charged with blessing and crowned with fruitfulness and beauty; —then may we expect the severe condemnation and the serious visitation of the righteous Ruler of mankind. We have then "sinned" (ver. 16); "iniquity is found" in us (ver. 15). And there will come the wages of sin, the brand of iniquity—loss, sorrow, shame, death. But to the penitent there is reconciliation and return; for though "the wages of sin is death," yet "the gift of God is eternal life."—C.

Vers. 20—26.—*The end of Divine judgment.* This severe condemnation of the idolatrous and vicious Zidon, coupled with the very gracious promise to Israel, with which the prophecy concludes, many instruct us—

I. WHY AND HOW GOD IS AGAINST US. "I am against thee, O Zidon" (ver. 22). And we know that Jehovah was expressing his high displeasure and was warning of serious national disaster (ver. 23) because of the iniquities of the state. The worst forms of religious superstition had long existed—idolatrous rites accompanied by immoral practices; the city was utterly corrupt; its condition called for Divine rebuke and chastisement. And the prophet delivers the one while he foretells the other, in the Name of the Lord. God may be "against" *us*. Not that he ever wishes us evil (ch. xxxiii. 11); on the contrary, he always desires the return and restoration of the worst (Luke xv. 7). But God is against us: 1. When our spirit and our life are wrong; when these are irreverent, immoral, unworthy, mischievous. 2. He then is seriously displeased with us, especially when his special kindness to us demands a very different return (John iii. 19). 3. He (1) *rebukes* us in his Word—he condemns us in the strong but yet the merciful language which his Son and his human spokesmen have uttered in his Name; and he (2) *chastens* us,—he sends us, as individual souls, that which answers to the national distresses here announced (ver. 23). He lets sickness and suffering, or defeat and disappointment, or opposition and overthrow, or bereavement and loneliness, come to our home or our heart; we are laid low; some "sword" goes through us, and we are among the slain.

II. HIS AIM IN JUDGMENT. Jehovah would smite Zidon, that that city, darkened in its mind by its long-continued guilt, might be enlightened; that it might understand that its licentious goddess was impotent to help in the hour of peril, and might know that God "was the Lord" (vers. 22—24). God's purpose in permitting or in sending

trouble to the home and sorrow to the soul, is *restorative*. He seeks to enlighten, and, by enlightening, to restore us. 1. He wishes us to understand clearly that the earthly forces and human attachments in which we have been putting our trust and seeking our satisfaction are wholly insufficient to us; that they break down when we most need their help; that they are vain; and that we are wrong. 2. He desires to lead us back to himself—to his side and to his service; to an absolute trust in his Son our Saviour; and to a whole-hearted consecration to his holy service. And it is well worth while to suffer anything and everything that we may "know that he is Lord;" that we may recognize in him the Saviour in whom to hide, the Divine Friend whom we can love with all the strength of our soul, the Leader whom we can follow at every step, the Lord whom it is both our sacred duty and our lasting joy to serve in every sphere.

III. HIS PROMISE TO HIS PEOPLE. (Vers. 24—26.) How far this prediction has been fulfilled is matter of sacred history; perhaps it is one of those promises which are only realized by "the springing and germinant" fulfilment of which Lord Bacon speaks. Beside (1) the *historical*, there is (2) the *spiritual*; and there is also (3) the *heavenly* fulfilment. Of these three, the second is found in the spiritual condition of those who, by a full surrender of spirit to their Divine Lord, find a perfect rest in him (Matt. xi. 28; John xiv. 27; Phil. iv. 7; Eph. iii. 16—19). The last will be found when the thorns and the briers which here are felt even in "the garden of the Lord" shall have been cut away by the strong hand of the Divine Husbandman, and there shall be beauty without decay, joy without suffering or satiety, life without any fear of death or of decline.

"Thorn without flowers; flowers on the thorn,
Then thornless, everlasting bloom,
Three crowns;—the first when *Faith* has worn,
And *Hope* the next, with brow still torn,
Love shall the last assume."

C.

Vers. 1—10.—*The Prince of Tyre; or, the expression and punishment of pride.* "The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto the Prince of Tyre," etc. Following the prophecies concerning the city and state of Tyre, and completing them, Ezekiel delivers these concerning the king of the famous city. They apply to him, not only as a person, but as the representative of the people in their prosperity, power, and pride. "Throughout the East," says the 'Speaker's Commentary,' "the majesty and glory of a people were collected in the person of their monarch, who in some nations was not feared as a man, but actually worshipped as a god. . . . The prince is here the embodiment of the community. Their glory is his glory, their pride his pride. The doom of Tyre could not be complete without denunciation of the Prince of Tyre." Our subject has two chief divisions.

I. THE EXPRESSION OF PRIDE BY MAN. (Vers. 2—6.) 1. *Pride of personality.* "Thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a god" (ver. 2; cf. Isa. xiv. 14). There are other instances of exceeding pride recorded in the sacred Scriptures; *e.g.* "Pharaoh King of Egypt . . . said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself" (ch. xxix. 3). Nebuchadnezzar said, "Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the royal dwelling-place?" etc. (Dan. iv. 30). Herod accepted the homage of the people who erected him as a god (Acts xii. 21, 22). But the Prince of Tyre, in claiming to be a god, goes beyond these examples. It is as if he upheld the city and state, maintained the prosperity and power of his people, and gave them all their glory. It is a claim of independence and self-sufficiency. In it pride reaches its most daring and blasphemous development, as weak, mortal, sinful man sets himself as a rival even unto God. 2. *Pride of position.* "I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas" (ver. 2). This proud boast of the Tyrian prince is partly accounted for by "the situation of the island-city, full of luxury and beauty, in the midst of the blue water of the Mediterranean." Moreover, Tyre was regarded by many as a sacred island. Fairbairn says that "Sanchoniathon expressly calls it 'the holy island;' and it is known that the Tyrian colonies all reverenced it as the mother-city of their religion, not less than the original source of their political existence. It was only in the spirit of ancient heathenism to conclude that a state which was not only strong by natural position, and by immense maritime resources, but also stood in such close

connection with the Divine, might be warranted in claiming, through its head, something like supernatural strength and absolute perpetuity of being." 3. *Pride of wisdom.* "Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee." Three facts concerning the wisdom of the Prince of Tyre are here brought to light. (1) He laid claim to pre-eminent wisdom. He looked upon himself as being wiser than Daniel. It is implied that the extraordinary wisdom of Daniel was at this time generally and widely known and acknowledged. "The prophet presumes it to be acknowledged that Daniel stands on the highest stage of wisdom attainable by man." When he made known unto Nebuchadnezzar the dream which that monarch had forgotten, he did that of which the wise men of Chaldea had declared, "It is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh" (Dan. ii. 11). Hence, as Hengstenberg remarks, for the Prince of Tyre "to declare himself wiser than Daniel, is at once to transcend the stage of man, and make himself equal with God." (2) This wisdom had special reference to the discovery of secrets. The proud prince boasted that no secret could be hidden from him (ver. 3). The comparison with Daniel is still maintained. "The secret" of the forgotten dream of Nebuchadnezzar was revealed unto Daniel in a "vision of the night" (Dan. ii. 19), and then communicated by him to the troubled king. And on a subsequent occasion that king said to him, "I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee" (Dan. iv. 9). But the Prince of Tyre boasted that his wisdom transcended even this; and from his proud boast we infer that his wisdom was not genuine. True wisdom humbles its possessor. Where it really is, as knowledge increases reverence also increases. (3) The aim of this wisdom was the increase of their material riches. "By thy wisdom and by thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches," etc. (vers. 4, 5), However great this wisdom might have been, however varied its manifestations, its great aim was the secular prosperity of the state. It did not look beyond the material and temporal to the spiritual and eternal. It was bounded by time and that little portion of this world over which the Prince of Tyre reigned. What a contrast it presents in this respect from the wisdom which is commended in the sacred Scriptures! 4. *Pride of riches.* (Vers. 4, 5.) In our survey of ch. xxvi. and xxvii. we noticed the abounding commercial prosperity of Tyre. Its merchants lived as princes. Its wealth was exceeding great. And as its king contemplated these immense riches his heart exulted in the sense of his own wisdom, importance, and power. "Thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches." In all self was supreme. In his treasures, in his wisdom, in his might, in the security of his situation, he recognizes no person or power greater than himself. Verily he regarded himself as a god.

II. THE PUNISHMENT OF PRIDE BY GOD. (Vers. 6—10.) Since "pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall," the Prince of Tyre must soon meet with a severe check to his unbridled arrogance. The prophet proclaims his doom. Notice: 1. *The nature of this punishment.* (1) The abasement of his glory. "They shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness" (ver. 7). We have seen that the great end for which the Prince of Tyre employed his wisdom was the promotion of their mercantile success, and the consequent increase of their riches. So that the beauty of his wisdom was the commercial prosperity of the state, which he viewed as its choicest result. Their affluence and success, their luxury and splendour, would be diminished, and their glorying in these things would be abased. (2) The slaughter of his life. "They shall bring thee down to the pit; and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the heart of the seas." The plural is used here—"deaths," because "the king, the central personage, the animating breath of the whole people, as the king is called in Lam. iv. 20, dies as it were many deaths—dies in each of his slain subjects" (Hengstenberg). Here is death in dishonour: "The deaths of them that are slain in the heart of the seas." "For kings to be slain by foreigners is dishonourable; when slain, not to be buried as kings is a greater dishonour; to be cast out, and drowned as common men, is a height of dishonour." Here is death in sin: "Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers." The uncircumcised denotes the heathen world in contradistinction to the covenant people of God. The death of the uncircumcised is the exact opposite of "the death of the righteous" (Numb. xxiii. 10). 2. *The Author of this*

punishment. "Thus saith the Lord God . . . Behold, I will bring strangers upon thee," etc. (ver. 7). God himself, in the operations of his providence, would thus bring down his pride of heart and vain-glorious boasting. 3. *The instruments of this punishment.* "I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations." The Chaldeans were strangers to the Tyrians. They are not mentioned (in ch. xxvii.) amongst the peoples who traded with Tyre. They were a people of a strange language, and their army was drawn from countries which were strange to the proud people of the island-city. And they were "terrible." They were powerful and violent beyond all others in that age—the dread conquerors of all whom they assailed. They came against Tyre, and, after long persistence, humbled the proud city. 4. *The consequence of this punishment.* "Wilt thou say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou art man, and not God, in the hand of him that woundeth thee" (ver. 9). The proud boasting of the Prince of Tyre would be effectually silenced. He would learn not only that he was not a god, sitting in the seat of God, but a man, whose honour could be laid in the dust, and who could be slain by a world-power mightier than that in which he had gloried. God will certainly bring down the pride of those who exalt themselves against him. "The lofty looks of man shall be brought low, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, and the Lord alone shall be exalted" (Isa. ii. 11). This was strikingly exemplified in Pharaoh (cf. Exod. v. 2; xii. 29—32), in Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. iv. 29—37), and in Herod (Acts xii. 21—23). 5. *The certainty of this punishment.* "I have spoken it, saith the Lord God" (ver. 10). And his word did not fail of fulfilment.

CONCLUSION. Learn: 1. *The danger of prosperity generating pride.* "When flowers are full of heaven-descended dews, they always hang their heads; but men hold theirs the higher the more they receive, getting proud as they get full" (Beecher). Let the prosperous guard against this danger. 2. *The certainty of pride meeting with punishment.* (Cf. Ps. cxxxviii. 6; Prov. xi. 2; xvi. 5, 18; xviii. 12; xxix. 23; Matt. xxiii. 12; Jas. iv. 6.)—W. J.

Vers. 11—19.—*Man in impressive aspects.* "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the King of Tyrus," etc. This lamentation for the Prince of Tyre presents considerable difficulties to the expositor. It has been interpreted from various points of view, which we need not discuss here. Different meanings also have been assigned to many of its clauses. Two things of great importance to a correct understanding of it, however, seem to us quite clear. 1. That in the King of Tyre here we have the representation of an ideal person, who stands for the Tyrian monarchy. "The kings of Tyre," says Fairbairn, "are personified as one individual, an ideal man—one complete in all material excellence, perfect manhood." 2. That a deep vein of irony runs through the description of the perfections and splendours of this ideal prince. "This ideal man, the representative of whatever there was of greatness and glory in Tyre, and in whom the Tyrian spirit of self-elation and pride appears in full efflorescence, is ironically viewed by the prophet as the type of humanity in its highest states of existence upon earth. All that is best and noblest in the history of the past he sees in imagination meeting in this new beau-ideal of humanity." This irony implies that the Prince of Tyre had a very exaggerated sense of his own greatness and glory; otherwise it would be pointless and inapt. This paragraph presents to us man in three impressive aspects.

I. MAN IN A MOST EXALTED CONDITION AND MOST FELICITOUS CIRCUMSTANCES. (Vers. 12—15.) 1. *Here is a most exalted condition.* This condition is variously described. "Thou sealest up the sum" (ver. 12). "To seal means to seal up and close that which is complete (cf. Dan. ix. 24; Job ix. 7). To seal the sum is to make up the whole measure of perfection." The King of Tyre is said to be "full of wisdom." In our homily on the foregoing paragraph we noticed that he boasted of his wisdom (cf. vers. 3—5). He was probably praised and flattered because of it. With truth Greenhill observes, "When princes know a little in anything, they are applauded and magnified for knowing men; but if they have got some deeper insight into things than others, then they are deified." This king is also represented as "perfect in beauty." In form and features, in expression and action, he deemed himself perfect. Or the Tyrians regarded their monarchy as perfect in its order and power and splendour.

"Thou wast perfect in all thy ways from the day that thou wast created" (ver. 15). 2. *Here are most felicitous circumstances.* (Vers. 13, 14.) (1) Delightful residence. "Thou wast in Eden, the garden of God." The reference is probably to the luxuriousness and beauty and grandeur of Tyre. The king had lived there in the full enjoyment of its countless comforts and its various pleasures, realizing as it were a paradisaical existence. (2) Royal splendours. "Every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, the topaz, and the diamond," etc. "The precious stones with which the king is bedecked bring the glory of his rank to outward view." He had jewels in great abundance, and rich variety, and of rare lustre and beauty. "Full many a gem of purest ray serene" glittered upon his person. Music is mentioned as another element of the royal state and glory. "The workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was in thee; in the day that thou wast created they were prepared." The accession of the king to the throne was celebrated with musical honours and rejoicings. Or perhaps the clause means that the Tyrian monarchy was thus inaugurated. In either case, music was one of the delights of the royal court of Tyre. (3) Illustrious station (ver. 14). "Thou wast the anointed cherub that covereth." The cherub was an ideal combination of creature life in highest forms and fullest perfection; and the cherubs in the temple were consecrated and anointed with oil (Exod. xl. 9). And as a king the Prince of Tyre was anointed, and was looked up to, or looked upon himself, as the embodiment of perfection. Moreover, as the cherubim with outstretched wings covered the mercy-seat, so the King of Tyre covered his people with his protection. The prophet goes on to say, "Thou wast upon the holy mountain of God," which the 'Speaker's Commentary' explains thus: "The cherub was in the temple on the holy mountain, so the Prince of Tyre was presiding over the island-city, rising like a mountain from the deep." But "the holy mountain of God" may be simply a figure denoting a very exalted station. The prophet continues: "Thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire." Various and conflicting are the interpretations of this clause. It probably means that his state apartments were decorated with precious stones like those mentioned in ver. 13 (cf. ch. i. 27), and that he walked in the midst of their glittering splendour. Here, then, notwithstanding that the exact meaning of some parts of the text is uncertain, we have a picture of a man in very exalted condition and very felicitous circumstances.

II. MAN IN A MOST EXALTED CONDITION AND MOST FELICITOUS CIRCUMSTANCES FALLING INTO HEINOUS SINS. (Vers. 16—18.) Unrighteousness was found in this exalted prince. Two forms of sin in particular are charged against him. 1. *Injustice in commerce.* "By the multitude of thy traffic they filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned. . . . By the multitude of thine iniquities, in the unrighteousness of thy traffic, thou hast profaned thy sanctuaries." Great traffic occasions great temptation. When men are devoted to merchandise, their path is beset by moral perils. They will be tempted to achieve commercial success by unworthy or unrighteous means—means which the unsophisticated conscience condemns as sinful, but which the commercial world allows and practices under plausible names. "The constant excitement of selfishness and covetousness connected with trade can only be effectually counteracted by the grace of God." "They that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare," etc. (1 Tim. vi. 9, 10). 2. *Pride of person and position.* "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness." The pride of this prince has already met with deserved rebuke. "Thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches" (ver. 5); "Thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas" (ver. 2). Secular prosperity often begets pride, and pride (as in the case of the King of Tyre) corrupts wisdom. Hengstenberg observes truly, "The foundation of wisdom is humility, which sees things as they are, has an open eye for its own weakness and the excellences of others, and is on its guard against dangerous undertakings, as David says in Ps. cxxxi. 1, 'O Lord, my heart is not haughty,' etc. The 'brightness' received into the heart blinds the eye, so that one regards himself alone as great, and everything else as small, and rushes wantonly into dangers for which he is not prepared, and enters on paths which lead to perdition; as, for example, Tyre undertook the combat against the flourishing Chaldee monarchy. God does not need to appear as a *Deus ex machinâ* in the judgment upon the proud, who wantonly brings himself to ruin."

III. MAN IN EXALTED CONDITION AND FELICITOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, HAVING FALLEN INTO HEINOUS SINS, VISITED WITH SEVERE PUNISHMENT. Three features of the punishment of the proud Prince of Tyre are exhibited by the prophet. 1. *His forcible removal from his exalted condition and felicitous circumstances.* "Therefore have I cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God; and I have destroyed thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire." He had gloried in his wealth and power and grandeur, and he should be deprived of them all. 2. *His open degradation.* "I have cast thee to the ground, I have laid thee before kings, that they may behold thee." "Formerly," says Hengstenberg, "in its brightness a spectacle of wonder and envy for kings, Tyre is now become for them a spectacle of astonishment and spiteful joy in its terrible downfall" (cf. ch. xxvii. 36). This was the appropriate punishment of excessive pride. The punishment corresponded with the sin. "When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom" (Prov. xi. 2; xvi. 18; xviii. 12). 3. *His utter destruction.* "Therefore have I brought forth a fire from the midst of thee, it hath devoured thee, and I have turned thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee." The fire signifies the wrath of God in the punishment of sin; and the effect of that wrath would be the complete destruction of the Tyrian monarchy. Here is an important fact. The destructive fire springs out of the midst of that which is to be destroyed. "All God's judgments upon sinners take rise from themselves; they are devoured by a fire of their own kindling." "The fire of lust and covetous desire draws after it the other fire of judgment."

CONCLUSION. Several important lessons are enforced by this subject. We mention three of them. 1. *The unsatisfactoriness of temporal prosperity when dissociated from righteous principles and intelligent piety.* 2. *The peculiar moral perils of successful traders, whether as communities or individuals.* 3. *The necessity of resisting the earliest risings of pride.*—W. J.

Vers. 20—24.—*God glorified in the execution of judgment.* "Again the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Zidon," etc. Zidon was "an ancient and wealthy city of Phœnicia, on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, less than twenty English miles to the north of Tyre," and on the extreme north-western border of the land of Israel. The Hebrew word *Tsidon* signifies "Fishing," and indicates the earliest employment of its inhabitants. The land in the neighbourhood of Zidon was of great fertility. "Adjoining the city there are luxuriant gardens and orchards, in which there is a profusion of the finest fruit trees suited to the climate." "The gardens of Zidon," says Dean Stanley, "are conspicuous even from a distance." In early times Zidon seems to have been a more important city than its neighbour, Tyre (cf. Josh. xi. 8; xix. 28). Homer, in his poems, makes no mention of Tyre, but several times he mentions Zidon and the Zidonians. But from the time of Solomon until the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, Zidon appears to have been less influential than Tyre. Our text declares the judgment of God against Zidon, and that in that judgment he will be glorified; and it suggests that *he is glorified.*

I. IN THE REASONS OF HIS JUDGMENT. These reasons may be arranged under two heads. 1. *The conduct of the Zidonians in relation to himself.* They were idolaters, worshipping Baal, the sun-god (1 Kings xvi. 31), and Ashtoreth as their tutelary goddess (1 Kings xi. 5, 33; 2 Kings xxiii. 13). It was from them that these idolatries had been introduced amongst the chosen people. The influence of Zidonian women upon the religious character of Solomon was most deplorable; and the marriage of Ahab to Jezebel, a Zidonian princess, was prolific of most disastrous consequences to the kingdom of Israel, both religiously and in other ways. The Zidonians might have obtained the knowledge of the true God from their neighbours the Israelites, and have turned to him in heart and life, if they had been so disposed. But instead of that, they corrupted Israel with their idols. Thus they robbed God of his rightful honour and praise. And his glory he will not give to another, neither his praise unto graven images (Isa. xlii. 8). 2. *The conduct of the Zidonians in relation to his people.* We have already spoken of their evil influence over them religiously. In other ways they were troublesome to them. They had been as "a pricking brier" and "a grieving thorn" to Israel (ver 24). There is probably a reference in this verse to Numb. xxxiii. 55 and Josh. xxiii. 13. And, like others of the neighbours of the Israelites, the

Zidonians seem to have rejoiced in their troubles and distresses. They are said to have done "despite unto them" (ver. 24). They had made them smart with their contempt and derision. The Lord takes notice of this, and will judge them for it. Says Hengstenberg, "While the Lord chastises his own people with an unsparing rod, he visits the neighbouring heathen nations for the wrong which they have done to his people, as if it were directed against himself, and verifies in them his word, 'He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye' (Zech. ii. 8)." Thus we see that there were good reasons for this judgment. God does not punish any person or people without just cause.

"His work is perfect;
For all his ways are judgment;
A god of faithfulness and without iniquity,
Just and right is he."
(Deut. xxxii. 4.)

"Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of thy throne" (Ps. lxxxix. 14); "Righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages" (Rev. xv. 3).

II. IN THE NATURE OF HIS JUDGMENT. "I will send into her pestilence, and blood in her streets; and the wounded shall fall in the midst of her, with the sword upon her on every side" (ver. 23). This judgment by pestilence and sword can hardly be said to have been executed in the invasion by Nebuchadnezzar, seeing that Zidon submitted to him apparently without offering any serious resistance. But this threatening of pestilence and sword may point to the sufferings of the Zidonians at a later period of their history, in consequence of their revolt against the Persians, to whom they were then subject. Zidon was at that time a wealthy and flourishing city; and the revolt would probably have been successful but for the treachery of Tennes, their king, who, in fulfilment of a compact with Artaxerxes Ochus, the Persian monarch, betrayed into his "power one hundred of the most distinguished citizens of Zidon, who were all shot to death with javelins. Five hundred other citizens, who went out to the king with ensigns of supplication, shared the same fate; and by concert between Tennes and Mentor, the Persian troops were admitted within the gates, and occupied the city walls. The Zidonians, before the arrival of Ochus, had burnt their vessels to prevent any one leaving the town; and when they saw themselves surrounded by the Persian troops, they adopted the desperate resolution of shutting themselves up with their families, and setting fire each man to his own house (B.C. 351). Forty thousand persons are said to have perished in the flames. Tennes himself did not save his own life, as Ochus, notwithstanding his promise to the contrary, put him to death. The privilege of searching the ruins"[1] for the gold and silver they contained was sold by Artaxerxes for money. But our point is that the character of this judgment contributes to the glory of God. Whether we refer the prophecy to the conquest by Nebuchadnezzar, or to the terrible transactions connected with the revolt against the Persian power, or to both, there was nothing arbitrary on God's part in the execution of the judgment. The Lord did not, as it were, go out of his way to inflict it. The Zidonians may be said to have brought it upon themselves. Yet all was regulated and controlled by the providence of God. The Divine punishment of sin is never an arbitrary infliction, but the natural working of a necessary law. The penalty is the natural consequence of the transgression. The suffering is the fruit of the sin.

III. IN THE EFFECT OF HIS JUDGMENT. A twofold effect is exhibited by the prophet. 1. *Relief and blessing to the people of the Lord.* "And there shall be no more a pricking brier unto the house of Israel, nor a grieving thorn of any that be round about them, that did despite unto them" (ver. 24). This refers not to the Zidonians alone, but to the other peoples who, being neighbours to the house of Israel, had been a trouble unto them. They "that are round about them, that did despite unto them," would cease to molest and distress them. "God's judgment on the ungodly tends to the good of his Church." 2. *Acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Lord.* Twice in this brief paragraph it is said of the Zidonians, "And they shall know that I am the Lord." (These words, which occur so frequently in this book, we noticed in ch. vi. 7, 10; vii. 4.) The people of Zidon "must recognize or experience him in his operations, whom they obstinately refused to recognize willingly" (Hengstenberg). It is also said of the Israelites, "And

[1] Dr. Smith's 'Bible Dictionary,' art. "Sidon."

they shall know that I am the Lord God." In the relief afforded to them and the deliverances wrought for them they would recognize the presence and power and supremacy of Jehovah. Thus "the Lord of hosts is exalted in judgment, and God the Holy One is sanctified in righteousness" (Isa. v. 16).—W. J.

Vers. 25, 26.—*God glorified in his dealings with his people under chastisement.* "Thus saith the Lord God; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered," etc. In bringing to a close the prophecies against the heathen nations which bordered upon the Holy Land, Ezekiel briefly outlines the glorious restoration of the people of God in contrast to the judgments which destroyed those nations. He also declares that he will be sanctified in his people in the sight of the nations. His dealings with his people who were in captivity would be of such a character as to promote his honour in the eyes of the nations who were cognizant of those dealings. Thus the subject is presented to us of *God glorified in his treatment of his people under chastisement.*

I. IN HIS CARE FOR THEM WHILE THEY ARE UNDER CHASTISEMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR SINS. Our text is itself an evidence of this care. They needed some strong encouragement to counteract "the despondency which was now, after the opening of the siege of Jerusalem, the most dangerous foe" which they had to contend against. God recognized their need, and the inspiring promises of the text were a contribution towards its supply. Moreover, his purpose to gather them again and restore them to their own land necessitated the exercise of care over them during their exile. We have reason to believe that when his people are under chastisement they are the objects of his special care. This is taught in his holy Word, especially in Mal. iii. 3, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver." In purifying silver from its dross "the refiner not only places his crucible on a hot fire, but heaps fire around and above it. Under this process it at first throws out a dark and offensive smoke, which, as the heat and its effects increase, becomes less offensive, until it altogether ceases, and the silver becomes beautifully white. The point of requisite purity and perfection is *when the refiner sees his own likeness reflected in the silver.* How admirably does this illustrate the gracious process by which, through means of affliction, our heavenly Father carries on the work of purification in the hearts of his children!" The refiner of silver keeps his eye steadily on the furnace, lest the silver should be injured by the intense heat, and that he may see when the process is complete; so the great Refiner watches over his children when they are passing through the cleansing fires of Divine chastisement. Here, then, is encouragement to the people of God in seasons of trial. God himself is graciously observing you. His eye is constantly and tenderly upon you. In this fact there is also vindication of the Divine honour in relation to the afflictions of his people.

II. IN HIS REMOVAL OF THE CHASTISEMENT WHEN IT HAS ACCOMPLISHED ITS PURPOSE. "Thus saith the Lord; When I shall have gathered the house of Israel from the peoples among whom they are scattered," etc. (ver. 25). When the object for which the covenant people were sent into captivity was achieved, he brought them together and reinstated them in the land which he gave to his servant Jacob. "In that furnace of affliction the national tendency to idolatry was burnt out of the national heart, never to reappear;" and then they were delivered out of the furnace. In their restoration to their own land the nations would see that the Lord had not cast them off or forsaken them. "For the Lord will not cast off for ever. For though he cause grief," etc. (Lam. iii. 31—33). Moreover, in that restoration there was a manifestation of the faithfulness, power, and goodness of the Lord to his people. *Faithfulness* in his remaining true to them and to his engagements to them, notwithstanding their former long-continued unfaithfulness to him. "If we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself." *Power* in his controlling the hearts and actions of men for the accomplishment of his purposes in relation to his people. And *goodness* in dealing with them so graciously, notwithstanding their ill desert. Thus would the Lord God "be sanctified in them in the sight of the nations." And still he speedily removes the chastisements of his people when they have effected the purpose for which they were inflicted.

"Praise him still the same for ever,
Slow to chide, and swift to bless."

III. IN HIS RESTORATION OF PEACE AND PROSPERITY TO THEM. "And they shall dwell securely therein; yea, they shall build houses, and plant vineyards," etc. (ver. 26). "As we have seen that the prophecies against the heathen reached, not merely to the particular nations, but to the world-power which they represented; as the same predictions are directed against Tyre by Ezekiel, against Babylon by Isaiah, and against the Apocalyptic Babylon by St. John; so this prophecy reaches far beyond a mere temporal restoration. It points to times of more permanent security, when from all nations and kingdoms the Church of Christ, the Israel of God, shall be gathered in, when the power of the world shall be for ever broken, and the kingdom of Christ shall be established for ever" ('Speaker's Commentary'). Two blessings are particularly mentioned by the prophet. 1. *Safety.* "They shall dwell securely." Israel was not free from enemies and molestations after their return from captivity. Delivered from idolatry, yet their evil hearts broke out into other forms of sin; and distresses followed transgressions. Christian believers are not exempted from either enemies or trials. Yet we may say that "believers always dwell safely under the Divine protection, and may be quiet from the fear of evil." For "if God is for us, who is against us? . . . In all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us" (Rom. viii. 31, 37; Heb. xiii. 6; 1 Pet. iii. 13). 2. *Prosperity.* "They shall build houses, and plant vineyards, and dwell securely." These operations denote the return of prosperity to the people. And it is certain that at times they flourished considerably in their condition and circumstances. There is evidence of this in the sumptuous houses which they built for themselves (cf. Hag. i. 4). In thus dealing with his people also the Lord would "be sanctified in them in the sight of the nations." But the text points onward to blessings yet in store for the Israel of God. Seasons of unprecedented power and prosperity await the Church in the future, when men everywhere shall know and acknowledge the Lord God. "All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Numb. xiv. 21). "In the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth," etc. (Phil. ii. 10, 11). And in the heavenly Canaan shall be enjoyed the complete triumph, and the undisturbed peace, and the deep, eternal joy.

"And the temple again shall be built,
And filled as it was of yore;
And the burden be lift from the heart of the world,
And the nations all adore;
Prayers to the throne of heaven
Morning and eve shall rise,
And unto, and not of the Lamb
Shall be the sacrifice."

(P. J. Bailey.)

W. J.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Ver. 1.—**In the tenth year,** etc. The precision with which the dates of the several portions of the prophecy against Egypt are given, here and in ver. 17; ch. xxx. 20; xxxi. 1; xxxii. 1, 7, shows that each was called forth by the political events of the time, and has to be studied in connection with them. It will be well, therefore, to begin with a brief survey of the relations which existed at this period between Judah, Egypt, and Babylon. After the great defeat of Pharaoh-Necho by Nebuchadnezzar at Carchemish (B.C. 604), on which Jeremiah (xlvi.) dwells fully, he was succeeded in B.C. 594 by his son Psammetik II., the Psammis of Herodotus ii. 160, who invaded Ethiopia, and died in B.C. 588, leaving the throne to his son Uah-prahet, the Pharaoh Hophra of Jer. xliv. 30, the Apries of Herod., ii. 161. The Greek historian tells us that he attacked Tyre and Zidon, failed in an enterprise against Cyrene, and was deposed by Amasis (B.C. 569). Zedekiah and his counsellors, following in the steps of Hezekiah (Isa. xxx.) and Jehoiakim (Jer. xlvi.), had courted his alliance against the Chaldeans. As Ezekiel had prophesied (ch. xvii. 11—18), they found that they were once more leaning on a broken reed. We have now come to B.C. 589, when Jerusalem was actually besieged, but was still dreaming of being relieved by an Egyptian army.

Ver. 3.—**The great dragon.** The word is cognate with that used in Gen. i. 21 for the great "whales," monsters of the deep. The "dragon," probably the crocodile of the Nile (compare the description of "leviathan" in Job xli.) had come to be the received prophetic symbol of Egypt (Ps. lxxiv. 13; Isa. xxvii. 1; li. 9). **The rivers** are the Nile-branches of the Delta. **My river is mine own.** The words probably imply that Hophra, like his grandfather Necho, in his plan of a canal from the Nile to the Red Sea, had given much time and labour to irrigation works in Lower Egypt. The boast which rose to his lips reminds us of that of Nebuchadnezzar as he looked on Babylon (Dan. iv. 30). He, like the kings of Tyre and Babylon, was tempted to a self-apotheosis, and thought of himself as the Creator of his own power. The words of Herodotus (ii. 169), in which he says that Apries believed himself so firmly established in his kingdom that there was no god that could cast him out of it, present a suggestive parallel.

Vers. 4, 5.—**I will put hooks in thy jaws.** So Herodotus (ii. 70) describes the way in which the Egyptians caught the crocodile by baiting a large hook with swine's flesh. Jomard ('Description de l'Egypt,' i. 27) gives a similar account (comp. also Job xli. 1, 2, though there the capture seems represented as an almost impossible achievement; probably the process had become more familiar since the date of that book). The fish that stick to the scales of the crocodile are, of course, in the interpretation of the parable, either the Egyptian army itself or the nations that had thrown themselves into alliance with Egypt, and the destruction of the two together in the wilderness points to some great overthrow of the Egyptian army and its auxiliaries, probably to that of the expedition against Cyrene (Herod., ii. 161) which led to the revolt of Amasis, and which would take the wilderness west of the Nile on its line of march. **The beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven** (we note the recurrence of the old Homeric phrase, as in 'Iliad,' i. 4, 5) should devour the carcases of the slain, the corpses of the fallen and prostrate nation.

Ver. 6.—**A staff of reed unto the house of Israel.** Ezekiel reproduces the familiar image of 2 Kings xviii. 21; Isa. xxxvi. 6. The proverb had not ceased to be true, though the rulers were different. Here, again, the imagery is strictly local. The reeds were as characteristic of the Nile as the crocodiles (Exod. i. 3; Job xl. 21). The image of the reed is continued in ver. 7, and the effect of trusting to its support is described in detail.

Ver. 8.—**Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee.** The words are probably addressed to the nation personified rather than to the king. The sentence of doom is now pronounced, no longer figuratively. And the special guilt for which it was inflicted, a guilt which the nation shared with its ruler, is emphatically repeated in ver. 9.

Ver. 10.—**From the tower of Syene,** etc. The Authorized Version is misleading, as Syene was itself on **the border of Ethiopia.** Better, with the Revised Version margin, *from Migdol to Syene, even to the border of Ethiopia.* The Migdol (equivalent to "tower") so named is mentioned in the 'Itinerarium' of Antoninus (p. 171, edit. Wafael), and was about twelve miles from Pelusium, and thus represented the northern extremity of Egypt; as Syene, identified with the modern *Assouan*, represented the southern, being the last fortified town in Egypt proper. The expedition of Psammis against Ethiopia, as above, had probably given prominence to the latter fortress. So taken, the phrase corresponded to the familiar "from Dan to Beersheba" of Judg. xx. 1, etc.

Ver. 11.—**Neither shall it be inhabited forty years.** It need hardly be said that history reveals no such period of devastation. Nor, indeed, would anything but the most prosaic literalism justify us in looking for it. We are dealing with the language of a poet-prophet, which is naturally that of hyperbole, and so the "forty years" stand, as, perhaps, elsewhere (Judg. iii. 11; v. 31, etc.), for a period of undefined duration, and the picture of a land on which no man or beast sets foot for that of a time of desolation, and consequent cessation of all the customary traffic along the Nile. Such a period, there is reason to believe, did follow on the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar. It is implied in vers. 17—21, which carry us to a date seventeen years later than that of the verse with which we are now dealing; and also in Jer. xliii. 10—12. Josephus ('Contra Apion,' i. 20) speaks of Nebuchadnezzar as having invaded Libya. The reign of Amasis, which followed on the deposition of Hophra, was one of general prosperity as regards commerce and culture, but Egypt ceased to be one of the great world-powers after the time of Nebuchadnezzar and fell easily into the hands of the Persians under Cambyses. It is noticeable that Ezekiel does not, like Isaiah (xix. 18—25), connect the future of Egypt with any Messianic expectations.

Ver. 12.—**I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations.** As before, records are silent as to any such dispersion. All that we can say is that such a deportation was uniformly the sequel of the conquests of

an Oriental king, as in the case of the captivities of Samaria (2 Kings xvii. 6) and Jerusalem, and of the nations that were settled in Samaria (2 Kings xvii. 6), and of the Persians by Darius; that if we find reason to believe that Egypt was invaded by Nebuchadnezzar after the destruction of Jerusalem, we may assume, with little risk of doubt, that it was followed by what Ezekiel describes.

Ver. 13.—**At the end of forty years.** The restoration described may probably be connected with the policy of the Persian kings. There may have been a parallel, as regards Egypt, to the return of the Jewish exiles under Cyrus and his successors, though it has not left its mark on history.

Ver. 14.—**Into the land of Pathros.** (For the land of their habitation, read, with the Revised Version, *the land of their birth.*) (For Pathros, see Gen. x. 13, 14; 1 Chron. i. 12; Isa. xi. 1; Jer. xliv. 1.) Its position is somewhat doubtful, but the balance of evidence is in favour of placing it in the Thebaid of Upper Egypt, which Herodotus (ii. 4, 15) describes as the original seat of the Egyptian monarchy. Its name may be connected with the Pathyrite nome in which Thebes was situated (Pliny, 'Hist. Nat.,' v. 9). The LXX. gives the form *Pathures*, and is followed by the Vulgate, with a slight change, *Phathures*.

Ver. 15.—**It shall be the basest of the kingdoms.** The words describe vividly the condition of Egypt under the Persian monarchy, after its conquest by Cambyses. With the Ptolemies it rose again to something like eminence, but that, it must be remembered, was an alien dynasty. The nationality of Egypt was suppressed, and Alexandria, practically a Greek city, took the place of Memphis, Sais, and Thebes.

Ver. 16.—**It shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel.** Throughout the history of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, as in the case of Hoshea (2 Kings xvii. 4), Hezekiah (Isa. xxx. 2, 3; xxxvi. 4, 6), and Jehoiakim (2 Kings xxiii. 35), their temptation had been to place its "confidence" in the "chariots and horses" of Egypt as an ally. That temptation should not recur again. Egypt should not in that way **bring the iniquity of Israel to the remembrance** of the Judge, acting, as it were, as a Satan, first tempting and then accusing. There should be no more looking after Egypt instead of Jehovah, as their succour and defence.

Ver. 17.—**In the seven and twentieth,** etc. The section that follows has the interest of being, as far as the dates recorded enable us to determine, the latest of Ezekiel's prophecies, and brings us to B.C. 572. It was manifestly inserted at a later date, seventeen years after those which precede and follow it, either by the prophet, as he collected and revised his writings, or by some later editor, as a proof that his earlier predictions had already received, or were on the point of receiving, their fulfilment. The fact that the special word of the Lord came on the first day of the year is not without significance. Then, as now, the beginning of a new year was a time for men generally to look before and after, for a prophet to ask himself what new stage in the order of the Divine government the year was likely to produce.

Ver. 18.—**Nebuchadnezzar,** etc. The words carry us to the close of the thirteen years' siege of Tyre referred to in the notes on ch. xxviii., and enable us to refer the commencement of that siege to the fourteenth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, circ. B.C. 586, two years after the destruction of Jerusalem. This agrees with the report of the Tyrian Annals given by Josephus ('Contra Apion,' i. 21), who gives the names of the kings of Tyre from Ithobal to Hirom, in the fourteenth year of whose reign Cyrus became King of Persia. Josephus, however, gives the seventh, instead of the seventeenth, year of Nebuchadnezzar as the date of the beginning of the siege. Here the point dwelt on is not the success of the siege, but its comparative failure. The labours and sufferings of the besiegers had been immense. Jerome (*in loc.*) states (not, however, giving his authority) that these labours consisted mainly in the attempt to fill up the strait between the island-city and the mainland with masses of stone and rubbish. These were carried on the heads and shoulders of the troops, and the natural result was that the former lost their hair and the latter their skin, and the whole army was in a miserable plight. And after all, the king had no wages for his labours. The city, indeed, was taken, but the inhabitants made their escape by sea, with their chief possessions, and the hopes of spoil were disappointed.

Ver. 19.—**Behold I give the land of Egypt,** etc. For this disappointment, Ezekiel, writing, so to speak, the postscript which he incorporates with his earlier oracles, promises compensation. Egypt, as he had said seventeen years before, should be conquered, and its cities plundered, and so there should be **wages** enough for the whole thirteen years of fruitless labour in the siege of Tyre. In that labour, the prophet adds (ver. 20), they, though they knew it not, had been working out the will of the Supreme. They also had been servants of Jehovah, as Jeremiah (xxv. 9) had described Nebuchadnezzar himself.

Ver. 21.—The horn of the house of Israel. The "horn" is, as always (1 Sam. ii. 1; Ps. xcii. 10; cxii. 9; cxxxii. 17), the symbol of power. Jeremiah's use of it (Lam. ii. 3) may well have been present to Ezekiel's thoughts. That horn had been cut off, but it should begin to sprout again, and the prophet himself should resume his work as the teacher of his people, which had apparently been suspended for many years after the closing vision of the restoration of the temple and of Israel. The words justify the conclusion that Ezekiel resumed his labours after B.C. 572. Was he watching the growth of Salathiel or Zerubbabel?

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—6.—*The doom of Egypt.* I. AN INSPIRED PREACHER PROPHESIES CONCERNING A GREAT FOREIGN NATION. The Hebrew prophet did not confine his attention to the little strip of territory on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, which we call the Holy Land. He was God's messenger to the world. 1. *The heathen are concerned with God's messages.* God notices them and has intentions concerning them. Therefore: 2. *It is the duty of the Church to make God's truth known to the heathen.* Ezekiel was not a Jonah; he was not called upon to visit the heathen as a prophet of Jehovah. But his written words might be read by some of the more inquiring Egyptians. It is well to take large views of God's thoughts, our duties, and the world's needs.

II. GOD CALLS A MIGHTY EMPIRE TO JUDGMENT. Tyre was greater and more famous than the little Ammonite and Moabite countries; but even Tyre was small compared with Egypt—one of the great world-empires. 1. *No people can be above the rule of God.* The biggest earthly kingdom is beneath the King of kings. Egypt is compared to one of its monster crocodiles (ver. 3). But it is not the less to be called to account by God. 2. *No people can be too strong to be overthrown.* Even great Egypt is to fall. The strongest have their weak places. Mighty citadels may be shaken by earthquakes. All man's grandest works and most imposing institutions are frail, and may be broken up by the rod of the Unseen.

III. THE GREATNESS OF ANTIQUITY IS NO SAFEGUARD AGAINST THE DANGERS OF FUTURITY. After China, Egypt seems to be about the most ancient empire in the world. In the region of its influence and among its neighbours Egypt was venerable with age before any of its rivals had made an appearance on the world's stage. Its known history goes back to four thousand years before Christ. For tens of centuries this hoary old empire of the Pharaohs held on its course amidst the rising and falling of many ambitious but short-lived neighbours. Yet Egypt was not immortal. Dynasty succeeded dynasty, and Egypt long stood the shock of war and change. But at last her hour of reckoning drew near. Then her long past afforded her no shelter. England cannot live in the future on her past history. The Church of the coming age cannot stand strong and safe on no better foundation than the glory of saints and martyrs in earlier ages.

IV. INTELLECT IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR A GOOD CONSCIENCE. Egypt was famous for her learning and her science. Long before the Babylonian and Persian astronomical science arose by the Euphrates, there were schools of literature, philosophy, and physical science on the banks of the Nile. It was a help in the training of Israel's great deliverer that he was educated in the greatest centre of light of his age (Acts vii. 22). Yet the great intelligence of ancient Egypt did not preserve its sons from gross moral corruption, and no worldly wisdom was able to provide against the descending arm of judgment. Culture will not dispense with the need of conscience. University honours are not passports to heaven. Knowledge and thought will not shield the sinful against the wrath of future judgment.

Vers. 6, 7.—*"A staff of reed."* Egypt is here compared to a staff of reed that had been trusted by Israel and had failed her in the hour of need. Earlier than this the Jews were warned not to trust Egypt because the old empire of the Nile had become weak as one of the reeds that grew by her sacred river. The confidence would be fatal, for the staff would break and pierce the hand of one who leaned upon it (Isa. xxxvi. 6). It was common for the prophets to warn the Jews against the mistake of going down to Egypt

for help (Isa. xxxi. 1). Now, however, Egypt is blamed for being so false and treacherous an ally as she proved herself in the time of Judah's need.

I. WEAKNESS IS CULPABLE. Egypt ought not to have been weak as a Nile reed. In her friendship, at all events, she should have shown more stamina. Moral weakness is certainly blameworthy. There is a great mistake in pleading weakness as an excuse for failure of duty. God never calls upon any one to do more than he is able to accomplish. If, therefore, his strength fails, and he cannot perform his task or face his temptations, the blame lies at his own door. We ought to be strong in soul. We have not even the excuse of Egypt—a heathen nation that knew not the true God. With inexhaustible fountains of spiritual strength within our reach in the gospel of Christ, it is our own fault if we become as worthless reeds when we should be like strong trees of the Lord.

II. FAILING FRIENDSHIP IS OF THE NATURE OF TREACHERY. We can wrong our friend without lifting a finger to hurt him, if we are found wanting in the time of need. Of all places friendship is the last in which weakness should be discovered. A true friend will make it a point of honour to be at his very best to give expected help, even though he be weak and suffer defeat in pursuing his own interests. He is an unworthy friend of Christ who is weak as a reed when called upon to do any service or make any sacrifice for his Master. It is treason to Christ to be found wanting in the day of duty or danger.

III. THERE IS NO PROTECTION IN THE PLEA OF WEAKNESS. Egypt was not saved on account of her weakness. She found no excuse in her inability to help her allies. She ought to have been able to help them. They who refuse to go into the Lord's battle because they have not moral strength with which to fight the foe will not therefore be permitted to shelter themselves in peace and quiet. They may escape the wounds of the field, but they will encounter the ills of an attack at home. No soul can be safe in neglecting duty, shunning peril, or fleeing from the place where Christ would have him stand.

IV. WEAKNESS MAY BE CONQUERED. The reed-like character may be made stout as an oak. God can make the feeble strong. "To them that have no might he increaseth strength" (Isa. xl. 29). Thus St. Paul could say, "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. xii. 10). Christ will not break the bruised reed; but he will not leave it bowed and useless. He will strengthen it. The secret of this transformation from weakness to strength is faith. They were the heroes of faith who, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews, "out of weakness were made strong" (Heb. xi. 34).

Ver. 9.—*The pride of creation.* In the insanity of his pride, Pharaoh is supposed even to claim the mighty Nile, that great work of nature on which the wealth and even the very life of his people depended, as a creation of his own imperial power. Such a foolish boast illustrates in an extreme form the common mistake of claiming to create what has in fact been received as a gift of God.

I. NOTE THE PREVALENCE OF THE PRIDE OF CREATION. This is seen with many kinds of success. 1. *National greatness.* The proud nation glories in having built up its own greatness. The mighty monarch regards himself as the maker of his empire. 2. *Private fortune.* One who has risen from the ranks regards himself as a self-made man. His success he attributes to his own ability and energy; and his ability and energy he regards as springing from himself. 3. *Skilful inventions.* Man does indeed seem to create with his brain. We say that Homer created the 'Iliad;' Phidias, the Elgin Marbles; Watt, the steam-engine; Stephenson, the locomotive. The thought that constituted or shaped these great works of genius was bred in the brains of the men who originated them. 4. *Personal character.* Men commonly regard themselves as the architects of their own characters. If there is growth in wisdom or strength, the strong temptation is to think that this growth is due to their own thought and effort. But—

II. CONSIDER THE FOLLY OF THE PRIDE OF CREATION. This pride springs from a delusion. Certainly it did with Pharaoh. He make the Nile! The Nile made him! Egypt was just the child of the Nile. Her wealth depended on the ministry of the mighty river. Floods gathered from melting snows on distant African mountains far beyond the territory or even the knowledge of the Pharaohs, swelled its waters so that they overflowed their banks and spread fertility on the narrow strips of river-side

called Egypt. But this is but an evident instance of what is true in less conspicuous ways. All great things, all new things, all things that exist, come from God. They spring from God, and they depend on him. 1. *In nature.* God is the Creator and Preserver of nature. He not only made the stone that the sculptor chisels; he made the laws of matter and the fundamental principles of art along which the sculptor must work. National greatness largely depends on geographical and other physical conditions of Divine creation. 2. *In providence.* God is still in the world, ruling it according to his own thought for his own great purposes. He overrules the government of kings. In private life he helps one on to prosperity, and sends another needful adversity through those turns of events, those conjunctions of circumstances, which the wisest cannot foresee and which the ablest cannot modify. 3. *In grace.* For the higher good of life spiritual attainments are necessary. Without these attainments Fra Angelico could not have painted his beautiful angels, Milton could not have written his grand epics, Luther could not have wrought his Titanic revolution. God's inward grace makes souls and characters good and great.

III. AVOID THE SIN OF THE PRIDE OF CREATION. This pride is positively wicked. It robs God of his rightful honour. It is distinctly ungrateful. Indeed, it is atheistic; and practical atheism of this character is far worse morally than the intellectual atheism that denies the being of God as a proposition in academic discussions. Such a sinful pride destroys a man's sense of dependence, his remembrance of obligations, his consciousness of responsibility, that admission of his own littleness which is necessary for humility as well as that feeling of God's greatness and goodness which is at the root of religion.

Vers. 14—16.—*The meagre restoration of Egypt.* I. GOD HAS MERCY ON THE HEATHEN. Egypt is to be conquered by Nebuchadnezzar; but in course of time the Chaldean yoke shall be broken off its neck and Egypt shall be restored to national existence. There is here a promise somewhat similar to that which the prophets repeatedly gave in God's name to the Jews. Now, this promise is offered to a heathen people. God is not only the Judge of the heathen; he is also their Saviour. He does not deal only in one way with any people. He cannot confine his relations with any to one side of his nature. He must be ever himself, his true and whole self. But the judicial, and that only in condemning to punishment, by no means includes the whole nature of God. God is essentially love. Therefore whenever God is dealing with any of his creatures, since he is always true to his nature and approaches them in the totality of his character, he must come in love, though at first this love may be hidden behind the clouds of wrath and judgment. In the gospel God shows his mercy to the heathen. Christ came because of God's love for the whole world. It is now the desire of Christ that his gospel should be preached to every creature.

II. THERE ARE IRREPARABLE LOSSES WHICH ARE BROUGHT ABOUT BY SIN. The proud pre-eminence of the empire of the Pharaohs was never recovered. The restored Pharaohs were feeble shadows of their awful predecessors. Cambyses the Persian king asked and received the daughter of one of them, not as a wife, but in the lower rank of a concubine. To the present day Egypt has been a weak and dependent nation. Ezekiel predicts that it shall be the "basest of the kingdoms." 1. *The temporal consequences of sin are unavoidable.* Repentance does not bring back the spendthrift's squandered fortune. A shattered constitution cannot be restored to sound health. 2. *Without a return to God the worst consequences of sin must continue.* There is a striking difference between the predictions of the glorious restoration of Israel and this prophecy of the meagre and uninviting restoration of Egypt. The conditions of the two peoples were very different. Israel humbled herself and returned in faith and devotion to God. Egypt remained a heathen nation, and as far as we know underwent no moral reformation. God was still merciful to her, but she could not reap the full blessings of restoration. We must believe that the heathen will be judged according to their light, and certainly not be punished for being heathen when they have no opportunity of knowing the truth. But the fact remains that while they lie sunken in moral corruption they cannot be also enjoying the heavenly blessedness of the pure in heart.

III. IT IS WELL THAT FALSE GROUNDS OF CONFIDENCE SHOULD BE EXPOSED. In

the past the Jews continually hankered after the Egyptian alliance. They will do so no longer. "Egypt shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel." 1. *When the nature of false hopes is exposed we are driven to the truth for our refuge.* No longer going down to Egypt for help, restored Israel will know that God is the Lord, and learn to trust him better. God wins us by disillusioning us. 2. *The ruin of false hopes is a perpetual warning.* Egypt is not to be swept to permanent destruction like Tyre, on whose rocks the fishermen are to hang their nets. She is to continue in existence, but no longer as a ruling nation. Thus Israel will have the spectacle of her neighbour's humiliation perpetually bringing her own iniquity to remembrance. Ruins are a melancholy sight; but they are an instructive one. It is well to study the sadder lessons of history.

Vers. 17—20.—*Nebuchadnezzar's wages.* Nebuchadnezzar was used as God's servant in the work of destroying Tyre. But he got little profit out of that expedition. Therefore he was to receive his wages in the possession of the fertile and wealthy land of Egypt. This curious rendering of history in the light of Hebrew prophecy and poetry is suggestive.

I. THE GREATEST KING IS BUT GOD'S HIRELING. Nebuchadnezzar is referred to as a common labourer whose wages must be provided for. The pomp and ceremony of royalty are nothing in the sight of Heaven. Religion, like death, is a great leveller.

II. GOD MAKES USE OF SELF-SEEKING MEN. Nebuchadnezzar was called upon to work out Divine decrees. But it was not pretended that he did this of set purpose or with any disinterested motives. His aims and ends were selfish, his views and ideas dark and heathenish. Yet he was a useful instrument of Providence. Thus the greatest selfishness may be converted into a means of doing God's will.

III. GOD IS A JUST MASTER WHO PAYS GOOD WAGES. No man shall lose by entering his service. At first there may be no advantage, and the service is found to be disappointing. Tyre does not pay. Then Egypt must be thrown in. The beginning of the service seems to be unprofitable; the end of it will certainly be amply rewarded. The labourer is not paid hour by hour. He must wait for his wages. God's labourers often seem to be kept long waiting. But they will surely see their pay-day, and then receive their dues with interest.

IV. HE DEGRADES HIMSELF WHO SERVES FOR NOTHING BETTER THAN WAGES. The servant needs, earns, and has a right to expect and enjoy, his wages. But he has a gross and selfish mind if he has no other interest in his work than the prospect of making a living out of it. Every man's work should be valued by him on its own account as a contribution to the good of society. Especially is this true of spiritual work. In that there is a prospect of rewards for which even Christ looked forward (Heb. xii. 2). Therefore it is not wrong to expect rewards; every lawful stimulus that can be had is needed to encourage our service. But he is no true Christian who only serves his Lord for the sake of what he can get. Nebuchadnezzar the heathen, not Paul the Christian, is his model.

V. THE HIGHEST SERVICE IS DISINTERESTED. Nebuchadnezzar, king as he was, had degraded himself to the level of a common hireling in the sight of Heaven by carrying out his great expeditions in a mean and mercenary spirit. But the lowliest Christians rise to the rank of "kings and priests" (Rev. i. 6) when they give the royal service that seeks for no selfishness. This condition does not contradict that previously mentioned, in which a reward is expected. All depends on its quality. It is the working for self-seeking ends that degrades Christian work. Christ's reward was unselfish—to "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." The true Christian should learn to say—

> "And I will ask for no reward,
> Except to serve thee still."

Ver. 21.—*The budding horn.* We are not to think of a full-grown horn putting forth buds, like Aaron's rod—in this case a useless monstrosity of growth. The idea is that of a young horn first appearing as in a bud and then growing. A horn is to bud and grow on the house of Israel.

I. THE PROMISE. 1. *In the nature of the horn.* This signifies three things. (1)

Strength. The horn is a symbol of strength. God promises an end of weakness, a time of power and energy. (2) Defence. The horn is a weapon, and by means of it its possessor wards off attack. The people of God have been harrassed and oppressed. But this time of helplessness is to be succeeded by one of security. (3) Glory. The horn is an ornament. The stag's antler is the animal's pride and beauty. Women wore horns as part of their head-attire. The exalted horn (Ps. cxii. 9) stands for the raising up of honour and dignity. 2. *In the growth of the horn.* It buds: (1) With a small beginning. The budding horn is at first only discovered as a slight swelling on the head of the animal from which it grows. The best things begin in a small way—the obscure spring of the great river, the grain of mustard seed, the little child, the Christian experience. (2) With continuous advance. The horn buds, pushes forward, develops into maturity. The best things are living and growing. They cannot remain in a stationary condition. The type to be followed is not the fossil horn in the museum, but the budding horn on the living head. All things of worth have a future towards which they press onward.

II. THE FULFILMENT. 1. *In Israel.* A horn budded on the head of the restored Israel. From the doleful captivity by the waters of Babylon the Jews returned to their own land. At first they were but a small and feeble folk—like the first appearance of the horn. But the horn was present in the bud. Israel was alive and growing, and she had yet a great destiny before her. 2. *In Christ.* Christ appeared like a horn growing out of Israel. He came as (1) the strength, (2) the defence, and (3) the glory of Israel. He was born an infant in a lowly condition. Elsewhere he is compared to a sprout from the stem of Jesse (Isa. xi. 1). Christ was a Jew, and he grew up quietly in the Jewish nation. His beginning was humble; but his complete life is beyond all description in its greatness and glory. All the hope of the future is with him. 3. *In the Church.* Christ lives in his people. He is born again in his Church, and he grows again in the growth of this his new, mystical body. Thus on the weary, faded world there is seen to grow a new and surprising life. The Christian Church came in strength and promise as a horn of salvation to the old world. It is still a growing horn. All Christians may enjoy its great advantages, and all men may be Christians. Thus there is for all the threefold promise of the budding horn—its strength, its defence, and its glory. No man enjoys these privileges to the full at first. The horn appears as a bud. The Christian life begins in lowly spheres. But it grows like Israel's horn.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 3.—*Boastful self-confidence.* The prophet, interdicted from prophesying concerning his own nation, directs his regard to one and another of the neighbouring states, with all of which the Jews were in some way connected. With Egypt, Israel had from the earliest period of its history been related and associated. During the epoch of the Captivity, the attention of those Jews who were left in Jerusalem and in Judah was turned towards Egypt, from which source they thought they might obtain assistance against the power of Babylon. The prophets who lived and prophesied about this period had occasion again and again to warn their countrymen against alliance with Egypt, against looking to Egypt for help and deliverance. They regarded Babylon as fulfilling with respect to the Jewish people the decrees of Jehovah himself, and counselled submission and a willingness to learn the Divine lessons of calamity and of exile. It was this just view of the position of their countrymen which led Ezekiel and others to warn the Jews against seeking the aid of Egypt. But the offence of Egypt, on account of which the prophet in the passage denounces the indignation of the Divine Ruler, was the sin of pride and haughty self-confidence.

I. EGYPT'S GROUNDS FOR SELF-CONFIDENCE. There was very much in the position, the strength, and the history of Egypt which seemed to men to justify the nation's pride and assumption of superiority. 1. The river Nile is alluded to by Ezekiel in this passage—a river in some respects the most marvellous in the world. The mystery of its source, the remarkable rise and fall of the stream, occasioning the extraordinary fertility of the soil, the stately temples and the lordly cities upon its banks, the harbour and port at its entrance into the Mediterranean,—all invested the Nile with a peculiar

interest. In fact, as has often been said, it is the Nile which made Egypt what it was—the birthplace of civilization and the granary of nations. 2. Hence the wonderful fruitfulness of the land, and the wealth of every kind which in its ages of prosperity Egypt enjoyed by reason of its teeming products, by which not only were its own inhabitants supplied, but distant peoples were fed. The territory was narrow, hemmed in by the desert on either side, yet abounding in most of the necessaries and luxuries of life. 3. The antiquity and fame of Egypt were unparalleled. A great nation before the other famous monarchies and empires of the ancient world came into being, a nation renowned wherever civilization existed, Egypt was prone to count herself the mother of nations, and to look upon all others as *parvenus*. A genealogy lost in remote antiquity not unnaturally inspired much pride and self-confidence, much haughty contempt for those who had their position still to make among the nations. 4. Add to all this the consciousness of great military power. The armies, and especially the cavalry and the war-chariots of Egypt, were such as to render her both formidable as a foe and desirable as an ally. These several circumstances account for the conviction cherished by the Egyptians that they were of all nations the greatest, and the least exposed to calamity and disaster.

II. THE WICKEDNESS OF EGYPT'S SELF-CONFIDENCE. 1. This appears from the fact that Egypt assumed the prerogative of the Creator himself. "The river is mine!" was the proud boast of Pharaoh, who herein proved himself to have lost sight of the dependence and feebleness which are attributes of humanity. God's river, given for their use, was by the arrogant Egyptians claimed as their own. 2. Egypt failed to recognize its dependence for material and social advantages upon the superhuman Source and Giver of all good. God was not in all their ways. 3. On the contrary, the people of Egypt took credit to themselves for national greatness and prosperity. It is, indeed, a sin common among the mighty, the wealthy, the flattered; who are too much given to assume first that they deserve credit for the powers of body and of mind with which they are endowed; and then, secondly, that all the results of the exercise of those powers are due to themselves. But nothing is clearer than that our humanity is bound both to gratitude and to humility. The appeal may well be addressed to every individual and to every nation, "Who made thee to differ? What hast thou that thou didst not receive?"

III. THE PUNISHMENT OF EGYPT'S SELF-CONFIDENCE. Such a temper of mind, such language, and such confidence as the prophet here describes, could not be allowed to pass unchecked, unrebuked. The Egyptians were preparing humiliation for themselves; for if there is one scriptural principle more than another enforced by the lessons of history, it is this: "He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart; he hath put down princes from their thrones." The facts recorded agree with the predictions of the inspired prophet. Egypt was speedily (1) subdued by her Babylonian foe; (2) humiliated by defeat; and (3) enfeebled in her military power, crippled, and rendered impotent.—T.

Vers. 3—5.—*Mightier than the mighty.* It is ever the vocation of the prophet, and indeed of every religious teacher, to counteract the superficial views and to expose the worldly standards which too often obtain among men. In the time of Ezekiel there were certain States of great wealth, power, and renown, which men were wont to regard with feelings of reverence amounting to superstition. One office which he was called upon to discharge was to shake the confidence of men in the great secular world-powers which seemed capable of enduring for ever, and of defying the assaults of human arms and even the decaying power of time itself. In this passage the prophet concedes the greatness of Egypt, and yet affirms the superiority and supremacy of Jehovah, the God of nations.

I. THE POWER OF A MIGHTY STATE REPRESENTED UNDER AN IMPRESSIVE SIMILITUDE. By the dragon we are to understand the crocodile, the powerful and monstrous creature which haunts the river Nile, and which is the terror of the population. An appropriate emblem of Egypt in its ancient, settled, and formidable strength.

II. THE REPUTATION OF THAT STATE AS INVULNERABLE AND IRRESISTIBLE. As the giant crocodile seems to make the river its own, lording it over all beside, devouring the fish, terrifying the dwellers upon the river's banks, so Pharaoh King of Egypt, in

his haughty self-confidence and defiant fearlessness, regarded himself as the great potentate of the world, secure from all molestation, able to carry out all his schemes of aggrandizement, ready to meet in battle, and certain to overcome, the forces of any nation that might be foolhardy enough to challenge his supremacy. As "the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers," so the power of Egypt dwelt secure and proud, claiming dominion, and dreading no disturbance from any foreign rival or foe.

III. THE ALMIGHTY GOD CONTROLS AND VANQUISHES THE POWER OF THE MIGHTIEST OF NATIONS AND OF KINGS. The language attributed to Jehovah, who is represented as addressing Pharaoh, is very graphic: "I will put hooks in thy jaws, . . . and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers." God uses his own agents, but he always accomplishes his own purposes. He saw the need of humbling Egypt's pride, and he employed Babylon to do this work. It was done, and done effectively. The arms of Nebuchadnezzar were turned against Egypt, and God gave the land of Egypt to the King of Babylon, as a spoil and prey, and as his hire and wages for the service he had rendered in the siege and destruction of Tyre.

IV. THE MIGHTY OF THIS WORLD, WHEN DEALT WITH BY THE MIGHTIEST, IS LEFT DEFENCELESS, HUMILIATED, AND ASHAMED. The picture here, in the fourth and fifth verses, painted by the prophet, is painful, but it is effective. The mighty monster of the Nile is dragged by hook and line from the depths of the river it has been wont to call its own, is flung into the wilderness, and is "given for meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the heaven." Egypt, and all her dependents who trusted in her and boasted of her patronage, are brought low, their helplessness is made apparent; and those who but lately were an object of envy and of fear are now regarded with pity or with derision.—T.

Vers. 6, 7.—*The "staff of reed."* The figure is a very striking and effective one, however it may have been distasteful to the house of Israel, and even more so to the vaunted prowess of Egypt.

I. THE SINFUL AND FOOLISH TRUST OF ISRAEL IN EGYPT. The circumstances in which Judah was placed at the time were such as to make it madness on the part of the remnant at Jerusalem to seek help from Egypt. Not only so; they were strictly forbidden upon Divine authority to act in this manner. In quietness and confidence lay their safety, in returning and rest, as Isaiah most powerfully and urgently represented to the people;—not in the horsemen and the chariots of Egypt.

II. THE HELPLESSNESS OF EGYPT AS A FRIEND AND DELIVERER. Why Egypt was at this time so powerless to help those who sought her alliance may not be perfectly clear to us; but the fact is so, and of this the events are sufficient evidence. It was a vain confidence which the Jews placed in the great and ancient world-power on the banks of the Nile. They thought they grasped a staff strong and trustworthy, and they found it "a staff of reed."

III. THE INJURY INFLICTED UPON ISRAEL BY THE FAILURE OF EGYPT'S AID. Not only did the helper prove helpless; not only did the staff, when leant upon, bend and break. Those who applied for help received hurt instead of aid; the reed broke and pierced the hand that grasped it and trusted in its support. Jerusalem was all the worse for turning to Egypt for assistance against Babylon, the victorious and, just then, irresistible power.

IV. THE COMMON CONFUSION OF THOSE WHO FOOLISHLY TRUSTED AND OF THOSE WHO PLACED CONFIDENCE IN THEM. Babylon rose; but Egypt and Judah fell. "All their loins shook;" *i.e.* the consequences of their policy were trouble, fear, and misery to both. Both incurred the hostility of the power which they in vain leagued with each other to resist.

V. THE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS LESSON OF THE INCIDENT AND EXPERIENCE HERE DESCRIBED. There is a proneness among all nations to be guided in their alliances, aims, and efforts by considerations of worldly policy and expediency. Too seldom do they ask themselves—What is right? What is in accordance with the eternal Reason and Righteousness which rule the world? What, in a word, is the course which God approves and enjoins? The proceedings undertaken at the instigation of worldly expediency, and in violation of Divine law, may meet with apparent and temporary

success. But the Lord reigneth; and sooner or later action which he disapproves shal issue in disappointment and disaster.—T.

Vers. 8—12.—*The humiliation of Egypt's pride.* It certainly gives a reader a somewhat dark and gloomy view of the state of the world in the time of Ezekiel, to read, as we have to do in his prophecies, one almost uninterrupted series of reproaches and condemnations. The prophet spares no man and no nation; and his writings are a monument to human iniquity, and especially to the faults and errors of the nations that flourished and fell in pre-Christian antiquity. In this passage he foretells the approaching humiliation of Egypt.

I. THE GROUNDS OF THIS HUMILIATION. It is a law of eternal justice that they who exalt themselves shall be made low and brought to the ground. The faults with which Egypt, as a state, are particularly charged are the faults of self-confidence, pride, and boasting—sins peculiarly offensive to the Most High, who will be acknowledged as God alone, and who will not give his honour to another.

II. THE POWER AND CAUSE OF THIS HUMILIATION. We are taught by the prophet —and the lesson is in harmony with the teaching of Scripture generally—to attribute this to the Eternal King and Judge, who is supreme over all nations. His sway is sometimes questioned and disputed, and is too often forgotten and practically repudiated. But behind and above all human powers there is a Power supreme and universal, not cognizable by sense, but discerned by the reason and the conscience. To this the working of moral law in the affairs of individual men and of nations is to be referred; to leave this out of sight is to leave much that we meet with in history and experience obscure and perplexing.

III. THE INSTRUMENT OF THIS HUMILIATION. The sword that was to cut off man and beast out of the land of Egypt, that was to lay waste and desolate the cities, was the sword of Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon, himself a heathen, doubtless stained with the errors and crimes of heathenism, yet employed as a suitable agent in the chastisement of many rebellious peoples. It is remarkable that the same power should be employed to chasten Israel, Israel's allies, and Israel's foes!

IV. THE CHARACTER OF THIS HUMILIATION. The armies of Egypt were defeated; the land was laid waste; the cities were dismantled; and the Egyptians themselves were scattered and dispersed among the nations. Scarcely an element of disgrace was omitted; the chastisement was complete.

V. THE EXTENT AND DURATION OF THIS HUMILIATION. It was to affect the whole land, from the mouth of the Nile to the southernmost boundary. And it was to last for the space of forty years—a limit of time which is not, perhaps, to be taken literally, but, as is usual in Hebrew writings, as representing a long period.

VI. THE LESSONS OF THIS HUMILIATION. 1. It was a rebuke to haughty self-confidence. 2. It was a summons to penitence and contrition on account of sin. 3. It was an inducement to submission. 4. It was a clear voice from heaven, calling the nations to put their trust, not in an arm of flesh, but in the living God. "Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God."—T.

Vers. 13—16.—*Light out of darkness.* The case of Egypt was very different from that of Tyre. For inscrutable reasons, Tyre was destined to destruction, and Egypt to recovery and revival. The destruction of one city occupying a rock upon the seashore was the extinction of Tyre. Egypt was a vast territory, peopled by a widespread and prolific race; it might be humiliated, but could not easily be politically annihilated. The fortunes of the land of the Pharaohs were gloomy in the immediate future; but the remoter prospect was not without relief and even brightness.

I. THE PROMISED RECOVERY AND RESTORATION. The prophet was instructed to foretell, first Egypt's defeat, dispersion, and captivity, and then Egypt's restoration to the land of Pathros, the land of their origin. We are not told, and we do not know how large was the section of the army or of the inhabitants of the country affected by these predictions. The fact only concerns us, and we recognize that in the midst of judgment the Lord remembered mercy, that banishment was not perpetual, and that the national life was appointed for revival.

II. THE QUALIFICATION AND TEMPERING OF THE BOON THUS GRACIOUSLY VOUCHSAFED. Lest Egypt should be again puffed up, the prophet was directed to utter an assurance that the nation, though spared utter humiliation and extinction, should nevertheless never resume its former greatness. Two points are expressly mentioned. 1. The restored Egypt should be "a base kingdom." It should not take the rank among the nations which it had been entitled to hold aforetime. Its power should be crippled, and its splendour should be dimmed. 2. It should no more bear rule over other nations. Such had in former times been subject to its authority, as dependents, subjects, and tributaries. Egypt's might should no longer avail to reduce surrounding peoples to subjection.

III. THE MORAL AND POLITICAL LESSONS OF THE PROVIDENTIAL ACTION OF GOD TOWARDS EGYPT. These also are very explicitly stated by Ezekiel. 1. Israel should no more look to Egypt for aid, as, in defiance of express warnings from Jehovah, she had been wont to do in times past. 2. Both Israel and Egypt should know that the Lord is God. This was a truth with which Israel was speculatively well acquainted, but which Israel was too ready to forget. Egypt had not enjoyed the same opportunity of learning the wisdom, the authority, the compassion, of Jehovah. Yet lessons may be learnt in adversity which prosperity cannot teach. Egypt was taught by stern discipline; but some impression was doubtless made. It was not for Israel's sake alone that Egypt's calamities were permitted; but that the smitten nation might bow beneath the rod, and acknowledge the justice of the King of men.—T.

Vers. 17—20.—*The King of kings.* By the very remarkable events here foretold, viewed in the light of the very remarkable interpretation which Ezekiel was inspired to add, we are taught some lessons of wider application and deeper interest than those which appear upon the surface of the prophet's writings.

I. GOD IS OVER ALL. (1) The hearts of kings, (2) the power of armies, and (3) the fortunes of nations, are in his hand.

II. GOD USES ALL. 1. He has and directs his own instruments of work, kings and nations being at his service. 2. He has his own resources from which to provide wages and rewards for those whom he employs as his ministers of righteousness and retribution.

III. GOD IS GLORIFIED IN ALL. 1. In the submission of the rebellious. 2. In the chastisement of the proud. 3. In the recovery of the erring but penitent.—T.

Vers. 1—12.—*The world-power doomed.* The work of the prophet is clear and definite. He does not declare his own speculations, nor the conclusions of his own judgment. He can specify the day and the hour in which God makes known to him his supreme will. Nor is the work so pleasant to the flesh as to induce men to adopt it of their own accord. The true prophet has to set himself against wickedness everywhere, of every sort and kind. He has to forego all human friendships, if he will publish God's Word.

I. THE WORLDLY KING IS SELF-DEGRADED. He is likened here to a crocodile. This is a fitting emblem for the King of Egypt. As the crocodile flourishes in the rivers of tropical lands, so the prosperity of Egypt depended wholly on the Nile. Without the Nile, Egypt would be a desert. So, instead of rising to the dignity of a true king, a representative of God, he sank into a condition of self-indulgence, *i.e.* to the level of an animal. To grovel in the mire, to find satisfaction in earthly possessions, to gratify the lower nature,—*this* was the supreme aim of Pharaoh. This is animalism; this is self-degradation.

II. THE WORLDLY KING IS VAIN-GLORIOUS. "My river is mine own: I have made it for myself." Self-degradation leads to ignorance, ignorance to pride, pride to empty boastfulness. A man must divest himself of his intelligence and his reason before he can say, "I have made this river for myself." This is an abuse of intellect, a prostitution of conscience. Not even a crocodile has said this. To depart from God is to wander into darkness, folly, madness. Such a state of mind is practical atheism. It is a direct challenge to God to display his judicial might and to vindicate his rule. Such a vain-glorious temper of mind is profane, insolent, little short of the Satanic mind.

III. THE WORLDLY KING IS A DANGEROUS ALLY. "They have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel." As a man maimed or invalided rests his weight, when walking, upon some mechanical support, and suffers grievous injury if his support breaks, so was it when Israel foolishly leant upon Egypt for support. The prospect of succour was specious and plausible. Egypt promised friendly aid, but when the hour of trial came the support collapsed, and both Israel and Egypt were injured. It is perilous to trust in any godless power. We are often decoyed into a fatal ambush by appearances. Friendship, if not a real advantage, is a bane. It is an injury to us personally, if the one on whom we trusted fails; it is a hundredfold more injurious to an empire. Test your allies before you trust them.

IV. THE WORLDLY KING IS EASILY VULNERABLE. Carnal security is weakness incarnate. It is a rampart of cobwebs. The King of Egypt trusted wholly in his river with its seven branches; yet nothing was easier than for God to dry up the sources of that stream, and leave the crocodile on the dry land, with dead fish sticking to his scales. This is a graphic picture of defeat, a sudden collapse of brag. The river having failed, the prophecy would speedily be verified, "I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the heaven." Achilles was said to have been vulnerable only in the heel, but every world-power is vulnerable in a thousand points. God's favour is the only known shield that is impregnable.

V. THE DEFEAT OF THE WORLD-POWER WILL BE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GOD'S KINGDOM. "All the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the Lord." This is a difficult lesson for men to learn, and the task is long. Yet God is not impatient. He calmly waits his time. Slowly, yet surely, the foundations of his empire are being laid. The idols of Egypt have been completely overthrown, and gradually God is being acknowledged. "He must reign." It is a grand necessity.—D.

Vers. 8—16.—*God's frown, a chill of death.* Men have very erroneous ideas of God when they think lightly of making him their foe. They have a vague idea that he is as impotent as one of their idols. Did they but know the magnitude of his power, and his complete supremacy over human affairs, they would feel that his frown was blackest death. The fruits of God's hostility are—

I. DISASTROUS WAR. "I will bring a sword upon thee." It would not be true to say that God takes part in every war. In many cases both combatants are to blame, and God cannot take sides with either. But, in every case in which one of the combatants is impelled to fight for an unrighteous cause, clearly God will aid the other side. Not always then. For although a combatant may have a righteous cause to defend, he may defend it in a vindictive spirit and with unhallowed weapons. It is well to note that God does fight with his trusty servants against evil-doers. He does employ the sword of men in his cause; and when he is behind the sword, "it will cut off man and beast."

II. WIDESPREAD DESOLATION. "The land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste." Nothing is easier with God than to make waste the land of Egypt. He has but to diminish the water-supply of the Nile, and the territory becomes a desert. To him it must be a grievous pain to make the fair face of nature desolate. He who delights in beauty, and caused the "sons of God to sing for joy" when earth was first robed in leafy vesture, must be pained when the verdure of forests and cornfields is blasted. Yet his desire for human good, and for the development of righteousness in the earth, is stronger far. *This* gives him a deeper joy; and, in order to promote moral loveliness, it is sometimes worth while to sacrifice the fair face of nature.

III. EQUITABLE REPRISALS. "Because he hath said, The river is mine, . . . therefore I am against thy rivers." This is language which men everywhere can understand. This is argument which leaves deep impression in the human breast. If men despise and treat with contempt God's messages sent in the form of human speech, God will speak to them in language they will not contemn. The strict equity of God's dealings has often been written in largest capitals. The prohibited thing has become a scourge. The quails lusted after became disease in the intestines. The Nile, worshipped as a god, was changed into blood. God is never in haste to vindicate his rights, because at any moment he can cast a bombshell of alarm in his enemies' camp. If men must needs trifle, let them trifle with Satan—never with God.

IV. ANOTHER FRUIT OF GOD'S DISPLEASURE IS TEMPORARY DISPERSION. "I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations. . . . I will bring again the captivity of Egypt." Compulsory banishment is a serious disgrace, a heavy calamity. The poor, no less than the rich, have tender attachment to their homes. The tendrils of strong affection twine round the cottage in which one is born. To be compelled to turn away from the familiar scenes—to be compelled by a foreign conqueror—is galling to every sentiment, is like a fire in one's bones. Such enforced separation means loss, hardship, uncertainty, dishonour. Defeat in war is affliction sore enough; banishment is tenfold worse. How insane on the part of men to provoke God into such necessity of chastisement!

V. ANOTHER EFFECT OF GOD'S ANGER IS, PERPETUAL DEGRADATION. "It shall be the basest of the kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations." To have a friend who is cultured and refined is to have an elevating power at our side, lifting us up to a better life. God is wise; and to have God as a Friend is to gain wisdom steadily. God is pure; and to have God's friendship is to become pure also. God is love; and he who is much in God's society becomes lovely and loving. All good flows from God as its Fount; and to cut off one's self wilfully from that fount is to sink into ignorance and misery. The friends of God must rise; the foes of God must deteriorate. To-day this prophecy is signally fulfilled. For centuries past Egypt has been the tool and the slave of other empires. She has been ground to the dust by the oppressor, nor is there at present any prospect that she will rise again. The word of the Lord by Ezekiel, although then improbable, *has* been performed.—D.

Vers. 17—20.—*A New Year's gift to a king.* There is a common proverb, that "he who gives quickly gives double." But this is not always true. A deferred gift is sometimes the best gift. God may to us seem to forget, but it is *only* seeming. His memory never fails, nor yet his good will.

I. ROUGH WAR IS SOMETIMES SERVICE DONE FOR GOD. "They wrought for me, saith the Lord God." Men of delicate sensibility cannot understand how God can allow the rough business of war to serve his cause. Nevertheless, he does. If a warrior-king is actuated by a desire to vindicate righteousness or to redress a wrong, he is fighting in the cause of Jehovah. Probably his motives and ambitions may be of a mixed and conglomerate character. Love of self may be commingled with love of justice; yet so far as a righteous purpose appears, he may expect the benediction of God. If our Lord Jehovah did not bless human endeavour until it was free from every admixture of selfishness, he would never bless at all. Abundant generosity marks all his action. By so doing he encourages youngest efforts in the right direction.

II. IN WAR, GOD IS THE SUPREME ARBITER. Possibly Nebuchadnezzar did not know Jehovah—did not know that he was rendering a service to the God of heaven. This happens sometimes. Isaiah was commissioned by God to say to Cyrus, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." Ignorance, if not preventible, is excusable. Ignorance that is wilful is a crime. God does not always take sides in war. Very often both sides are actuated simply by malice or some equally base passion. Temporary success in war cannot, therefore, be accepted as the approval of Jehovah. The devil does, now and again, obtain a transient triumph—at least a seeming triumph. But, on the whole, God acts as Arbiter, and often quickly reverses the effect of a visible conquest. In every battle he sees much to condemn, sometimes much to approve.

III. GOD IS THE UNDISPUTED DISPOSER OF EMPIRES. Without question, he gave the empires of Canaan to the seed of Abraham. He gave the territory of North America to the British. He gave Egypt for a time to the kings of Persia. "He setteth up one, and putteth down another." As he claims supreme control over individual persons, so he does also over empires, large and small. "The earth is the Lord's." He alone may rule with a high hand, and give to men no account of his doings.

IV. HIS REWARDS, THOUGH SEEMINGLY DELAYED, ARE TIMELY AND GENEROUS. In this passage God does not stint his praise to Nebuchadnezzar. He generously styles it "a great service." He has noted carefully all the hard toil which his army

endured. Not an item of hardship or fidelity is overlooked. Every tear of the widow, every sorrow of the orphan, was lodged in his memory. To have rewarded the king immediately might have been to do him injury. It might have unduly elated him. It might have fed his pride. It might have fostered an ambition for further conquests. Ambition of this sort is a terrible passion in man, and needs to be held in with a strong curb. But when danger of abusing the reward is past, God will give it, and give it in an ample measure. To possess Egypt was wealth, honour, fame. It was to gain a notable place in the history of the world. Be quite sure that when God rewards a man it will be with generosity more than royal—generosity not to be measured. Having done good service, we can afford to wait.—D.

Vers. 1—6.—*Egypt: a guilty vaunt.* Notwithstanding that Judah was now looking to Egypt for deliverance, Ezekiel uttered his strong and unqualified condemnation of that idolatrous power. The Hebrew prophet was always entirely unaffected by considerations of worldly policy. What is here energetically rebuked is the sinful pride of that self-sufficient people. "My river is my own. I have made it for myself," said the Egyptian "crocodile." Whether that tone be taken by Pharaoh or by the country over which he ruled, by the minister or the Church, by the individual or the community, anywhere and at any time, it is—

I. A PIECE OF FOLLY. In a purely political sense a country *does* belong to its inhabitants, and they have made it what it is. But in no other sense. That noble river Nile, the strength and the glory of the land, flowed in its channels and enriched the soil, not because Pharaoh or because Egypt had done anything remarkable, but because he who "sendeth forth the springs into the valleys" and "watereth the hills from his chambers" made the streams to run from the mountain-sides and to meet and flow in the great river-bed. Heaven sent the rains and the showers which fed the river which fertilized the land. And if we will but go back far enough and trace our treasures and our joys to their ultimate source, we shall see and we shall feel the folly of appropriating to ourselves the wealth, the knowledge, the spiritual capacity, the material or moral resources, which proceed from God himself. From him they come and to him they belong. To say, "My river is my own," is to speak with falsehood on our tongue; such language is the utterance of foolish thoughtlessness.

II. AN ACT OF SIN. It is positively wrong; for is it not "robbing God"? When we speak in this strain, because we think and feel in this habit of mind, we assume to ourselves that which we should be freely and continually offering to our Creator. We are denying to him that which is his due. We are showing ourselves to him as the irreverent, ungrateful, undutiful subjects and recipients that we are. Thus that which is foolish and false is also that which is guilty; it is accumulating Divine displeasure. It is taking up a position in which God, just because he loves us and wishes our true and lasting welfare, is compelled to say to us, "I am against you" (ver. 3).

III. THE WAY TO DISILLUSION AND HUMILIATION. For the interpretation or application of the solemn threatenings here pronounced (vers. 4—6), see Exposition. But however we explain the prophet's words, it is clear that Egypt was awakened from its dream of absolute authorship and ownership, and that it had to stand down from its proud position of protector, and wear, for some time and in some degree, the yoke of subjection. Pride preceded a fall beneath those skies as beneath the heavens everywhere. Everywhere, to the proud country, to the pretentious power in Church or state, to the arrogant individual, there is sure to come the hour when the fond dream of lasting superiority is dispelled, when the pedestal on which it (he) stood is broken, when the homage once rendered it turns to defiance, and the honour it once enjoyed is lost in shame. How excellent, on the other hand, is that humility which leads ever upwards and ends in immortal glory!—C.

Ver. 16.—*The confidence which is condemned.* To whatever straits and to whatever desolation Egypt was actually reduced—that is a question to be decided by our principle of interpretation and by our knowledge of history—it is clear that it was to be brought so low that it would be incompetent to play the part of deliverer to Israel or Judah, as it had done before (see ch. xvii. 15—17). It would never again be "the

confidence of the house of Israel, bringing iniquity to remembrance" (Revised Version). For that misplaced hope in Egypt *was* iniquity in the sight of God (see Isa. xxx. 2, 3; xxxi. 1; xxxvi. 4, 6). It was a sinful failure to trust in its one true Refuge, and it was a blind and sensuous confidence in mere numbers and military prowess. The "iniquity" to which Egypt would never again tempt the people of God, or even bring to their remembrance, was, as we thus see, an unwarrantable and God-forgetting trust. We ask—Where do our temptations to this same folly lie, and how are they to be shunned or to be defeated?

I. WHERE OUR TEMPTATIONS LIE. We are continually invited to look for our resources or for our refuge in other beings than in God, in other things than in his Word and in his service. 1. *In man;* in the human counsel which proves to be short-sighted and shallow folly, and not the profound wisdom which it purported to be (see Jer. xvii. 5). 2. *In money;* in that which commands many valuable things (Eccles. x. 19), but which conspicuously fails in the hour of darkest trouble and deepest need, which cannot enlighten the mind, or cleanse the conscience, or heal the heart, or amend the life: it is ill indeed to "trust in uncertain riches" (1 Tim. vi. 17). 3. *In numbers;* it is a very common delusion that we are right and safe if we have a great majority on our side. But what are all the hosts that man can gather when God is "against" us (ver. 3)? How often in human history have great numbers proved to be utterly vain, and to have done nothing but stamp and signalize defeat? 4. *In our own intelligence.* The proud of heart say within themselves, "We shall discern the danger, we shall distinguish between the faithful and the false, we shall be able to defeat the enemy and to secure ourselves; others may have failed, but our sagacity will suffice." But they go on their way of false confidence, and they are rudely awakened from their dream (see Prov. iii. 5; Jer. ix. 23, 24). All these false trusts are *temptations* to us. For they (1) lead us away from the one true source of strength and safety; and they (2) conduct us to defeat and to disaster. The hour comes when we recognize our folly, and see that we must suffer seriously for our fault.

II. HOW THEY ARE TO BE MET AND MASTERED. 1. Not by attempting to *avoid them altogether.* Those who have sought to shun all temptation to seek safety or satisfaction in lower objects by placing themselves wholly out of their range, have found that they have only put themselves *within range* of other evils, less apparent but more subtle and quite as serious. 2. By a studious and strenuous endeavour to *moderate our trust* in the human and the material according to its worth. But chiefly: 3. By careful and constant *cultivation of our trust* in the living God, by seeking his face, by worshipping in his house, by consulting his Word, by daily addressing ourselves to him in the still hour of private, personal communion.—C.

Ver. 21.—*Speech, silence, and prophecy.* "I will give thee the opening of the mouth." We may be led up to the proper subject of the text by reference to—

I. THE GIFT OF SPEECH. We wonder how animals succeed in communicating with one another; that they are supplied with some method of making known and passing on is unquestionable. But whatever their means may be, they fall very short of the great gift of speech which it is our priceless advantage to possess. So common and so familiar has it become, that we little heed its value or the goodness of God in bestowing it. But when we dwell in thought upon all the difference it has made to human life, and the extent to which it has enriched us, we may well bless God with fervent feeling that he has given to our race "the opening of the mouth" in speech and in song. How has it multiplied our power to instruct and enlighten, to warn and save, to comfort and to heal, to cheer and to gladden, to pray and to praise and to exhort, to prepare for all the duty and the burden of life, to make ready for the brighter scenes and ampler spheres of immortality! And as this is so, (1) how carefully should we guard, how earnestly pray, how seriously admonish, against its abuse! (2) how studious should we be to make the best and wisest use of this inestimable gift of God!

II. THE GRACE OF SILENCE. If there is a great value in "the opening of the mouth," so also is there much virtue in keeping it closed when "only silence suiteth best." To spare the stinging but severe retort that rises to the lips; to delay the accusation until more knowledge has been gained; to bear without rebuke the sound that tries our nerves, but is the delight of others; to refuse to pass on the unproved default; to

refrain from the commonplaces of comfort in presence of some fresh, acute, overwhelming sorrow; to wait our time and our turn until others have spoken who should precede us, or until we have earned the right to speak; to "be dumb, to open not our mouth" under the chastening hand of God, and to retire into the sanctuary of the inner chamber that we may think and understand;—this is a true "grace," which they who seek the best in human character and life will not fail to desire and to pursue.

III. THE PRIVILEGE OF PROPHECY. No nobler order of men ever rose and wrought than the Hebrew prophets. They were "men that spoke for God," as their name indicates they should have been. And they "opened their mouth" fearlessly, faithfully, even heroically. They were to be found in the front when there was unpalatable truth to be spoken, uninviting duty to be done, serious danger to be dared. They did not shrink from speaking the straightforward truth to the people, the army, the sovereign. The Lord "before whom they stood," and in whose near presence they felt that they were safe, gave them the wisdom to speak and the courage to act. He "gave them the opening of the mouth;" and hence these strong, brave, searching, sometimes scathing, sometimes cheering words, which we still read in our homes and in our sanctuaries, which still help to form our character and to shape our life. Their true successors are found in those Christian ministers, and in those who do not call themselves by that name, who "speak for God," and who *do* speak for him because, like their prototypes, they (1) are enriched by him with knowledge and insight—understanding of his will and insight into the nature and character of their fellowmen; (2) are endowed by him with the power of utterance—such utterance as constrains attention and secures reflection and emotion; (3) are impressed, if not oppressed, with an inextinguishable impulse to speak what they have learned of God (Jer. xx. 9; Ps. xxxix. 3; Acts iv. 20; 1 Cor. ix. 16).—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXX.

Ver. 1.—**The word of the Lord came again**, etc. The section that follows, ending with ver. 18, is exceptional as standing without a date. It may be either (1) a continuation of the prophecy in ch. xxix. 17—21, and so belong to the latest years of Ezekiel's work; or (2) that prophecy may be regarded as standing by itself—a parenthesis inserted at a later date, so that we go back to the earlier word of the Lord in ch. xxix. 1—16. Jerome, Hävernick, Hitzig, Rosenmüller, Kliefoth, and others are in favour of the former view, chiefly on the ground that ver. 3 speaks of the nearness of the coming judgment. That the day of the Lord should be "near" is, however, too vague and relative a term to be decisive. On the whole, the question must be left as one which we have no sufficient data for solving. The close parallelism with ch. xxix. seems to me slightly in favour of the second view.

Ver. 2.—**Howl ye.** The words read like an echo of Isa. xiii. 6, and find a parallel also in Joel i. 11, 13; Zeph. i. 7, 14. **Woe worth the day!** It may be well to note that the familiar phrase is a survival of the Anglo-Saxon verb *weorthan* (German *werden*), "to become," so that its exact meaning is "Woe be to the day!"

Ver. 3.—**The day of the Lord.** Here, as everywhere (see note on ch. xiii. 5), the words stand for any time in which the Divine judgments manifest themselves in the world's history. Of it Ezekiel says, following in the footsteps of Joel (ii. 2), that it shall be **a day of cloud**, *i.e.* of darkness and trouble; **a day of the heathen**, *i.e.* a time in which the heathen who had exulted in the punishment of Israel should know that the Lord was their Judge also, that he had his "day" appointed for them.

Ver. 4.—**Great pain shall be in Ethiopia.** The words point to the extension of the invasion of Egypt—by Nebuchadnezzar in the first instance, and afterwards by other conquerors—to the upper valley of the Nile. **They shall take away her multitude.** The word is taken by Keil, Smend, and others of things rather than persons, the multitude of possessions. Hengstenberg renders "tumult" in the sense of the stir of a crowded city. The **foundations** are probably to be taken figuratively of the bases of the prosperity of Egypt, its allies and mercenaries, rather than of actual buildings (comp. Ps. xi. 3; lxxxii. 5).

Ver. 5.—**Libya.** Here the Authorized Version gives (rightly enough, though inconsistently) the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Phut*, which is reproduced in the Revised Version. The *Lydians*, in like manner, stand for Lud; but we have to remember, as before (ch. xxvii. 10), that they are the

African, and not the Asiatic, people of that name. In Jer. xlvi. 9 the two nations are named among the auxiliaries of Egypt. Possibly the similarity of name may have led to the term being used also for the Lydian and Ionian forces enlisted by Psammetichus I. (Herod., iii. 4); but there seems more reason for including these in the **mingled people** that are next mentioned. **Chub**, or *Cub* (Revised Version), is found here only, and has consequently given occasion to many guesses. Hävernick connects it with the *Kufa*, a district of Media, often named in Egyptian monuments; Michaelis, with Kobe on the Ethiopian coast of the Indian Ocean; Maurer, with Cob, a city of Mauretania; Gesenius, Ewald, and Bunsen suggest the reading *Nub*, and identify it with Nubia; Keil and Smend adopt the form *Lub*, found in the Lubim of 2 Chron. xvi. 8 and Nah. iii. 9. On the whole, there are no adequate data for the solution of the problem. **The men of the land that is in league.** Here, again, we are in a region of many conjectures. (1) Hitzig and Kliefoth (following Jerome and the LXX., which gives, "the land of my covenant") take it of Canaan, as being the land in covenant with Jehovah (Ps. lxxiv. 2, 20; Dan. xi. 28; Acts iii. 25). (2) Hengstenberg, for the Sabeans, as being members of the Judæo-Egyptian confederacy implied in ch. xxiii. 42. (3) Keil, Ewald, and Smend, of a people among the allies of Egypt, unknown to us, but sufficiently designated by Ezekiel for his readers.

Ver. 6.—**They that uphold Egypt.** The words include the allies named in ver. 5; but also embrace the rulers, generals, perhaps the idols, of Egypt itself. **From the tower of Syene.** As before, in ch. xxix. 10, "from Migdol to Syene."

Ver. 9.—**In that day shall messengers**, etc. The whole passage seems an echo of Isa. xviii. 2. The **ships** are those that bear the tidings of the conquest of Lower Egypt to the upper valley of the Nile. The **careless Ethiopians** are so named as confiding in their remoteness from the scene of action. They thought themselves safe, and were lulled into a false security (comp. Isa. xxxii. 9—11 and Zeph. ii. 15, for a like rendering of the verb). **As in the day of Egypt.** As Isaiah (ix. 4) refers to "the day of Midian," so Ezekiel points to the memorable time when like tidings of the judgments that fell on Egypt carried dismay into the hearts of the surrounding nations (Exod. xv. 14, 15).

Vers. 10, 11.—**By the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.** Hitherto (on the assumption that ch. xxix. 17—21 stands by itself, and that we are still in the prophetic message of ch. xxix. 1—16) the predictions have been general. Now Ezekiel, following in the footsteps of Jeremiah (ch. xlvi.), specifies the Chaldean king and his people, **the terrible of the nations** (as in ch. xxviii. 7; xxxi. 12, *et al.*), as those who were to execute the Divine judgments.

Ver. 12.—**I will make the rivers dry.** The *rivers* are the Nile-branches of the Delta, and their being *dried* up points, perhaps, literally to a failure in the inundation of the Nile on which its fertility depended; figuratively to a like failure of all its sources of prosperity.

Ver. 13.—**Noph**, or, as in Hos. ix. 6, *Moph*, is a form of the Egyptian *M'noph*, the Greek *Memphis* (so in the LXX.), the capital of Lower Egypt, the chief centre of the worship of Phthah, whom the Greeks identified with Hephæstos. Hence the special mention of the **idols and images.**

Ver. 14.—(For **Pathros**, see note on ch. xxix. 14.) **Zoan**—joined with *Noph* in Isa. xix. 11, mentioned in Numb. xiii. 22 as older than Hebron—is the *Tanis* of the Greeks, situated on the Tanitic branch of the Delta of the Nile. **No**; or, as in Nah. iii. 8, *No Amon* (equivalent to "the abode of Ammon"), the sacred name of the Egyptian Thebes. The LXX. gives Diospolis; the Vulgate, by a curious anachronism, Alexandria.

Vers. 15, 16.—**Sin.** The name signifies "mire," like the Greek *Pelusium* (so the Vulgate), from πηλός (Strabo, xvii. p. 802). The modern name *Pheromi* has the same meaning. The remains of an old fortress near the town are still known as *Tineh*, the "clay" of Dan: ii. 41. The fortress stood on the eastern branch of the Nile, surrounded by swamps, and its position made it, in modern phrase, the "key" of Egypt. Suidas and Strabo (*ut supra*) describe it as an obstacle to invaders from the East. Ezekiel, in describing it as "the *strength of* Egypt," must have known its local characteristics. **The multitude of No**; in the Hebrew, as in Jer. xlvi. 25, *Hamon-No*. Did the prophet, after the manner of Micah i. 10—14, indulge in a play on the full name of the city as given in Nah. iii. 8? The LXX., as before, gives *Diospolis*, and the Vulgate *Alexandria*. **Noph** shall have **distresses daily.** So the Vulgate, *angustiæ quotidianæ*. Hitzig and Keil, however, take the words as "troubles in the day-time." The city should be attacked, not by night (Obad. 5), but in open day (compare "the spoiler at noonday" of Jer. xv. 8). The LXX. omits the name of the city, and renders, "waters shall be poured out." For **Sin** the LXX. here gives, following a different reading, "Syene."

Ver. 17.—**The young men of Aven**; the "On" of Gen. xli. 45, the "house of the

sun" of Jer. xliii. 13, the *Heliopolis* of the LXX. and Vulgate. The form *Aven* (Heb. for "a vain thing!" as in Hos. iv. 15; x. 5) was perhaps chosen as a word of scorn pointing to the idolatry of the city. Pi-beseth; LXX., *Bubastos*. The city situated on the Suez Canal, begun by Necho and finished under Ptolemy II. (Herod., ii. 59). It derived its name from the cat-headed goddess Pasht, and was the chief seat of the nome which was named after it. It was destroyed by the Persians (Diod. Sic., xv. 51), but the name lingers in *Teb-bastat*, a heap of ruins about seven hours' journey from the Nile.

Ver. 18.—**At Tehaphnehes**; the *Tahapanes* of Jer. ii. 16; xlii. 7; xliv. 1; xlvi. 14; (where it appears as having a royal palace); the *Taphnæ* of the LXX.; the *Daphne* of Herod., ii. 30. It was another frontier-fortress in the neighbourhood of Pelusium, built by Psammetichus. It may, perhaps, be represented by the modern *Tel-ed-Defenne*, about twenty-seven miles south-west of Pelusium. **The day shall be darkened.** The normal image for the departure of the sunshine of prosperity, as in ver. 3 and ch. xxxii. 7 (comp. Amos v. 20; viii. 9; Isa. v. 30; Jer. xiii. 16, *et al.*). **The yokes of Egypt.** Commonly, as in ch. xxxiv. 27; Lev. xxvi. 13; Jer. xxvii. 2; xxviii. 10, 12, the phrase would imply the deliverance of Egypt from the yoke of oppression suffered at the hand of others. Here that sense is clearly inappropriate. The LXX. and Vulgate give "the sceptres" of Egypt, which implies a different reading, and this is adopted in substance by Ewald and Smend, the latter preferring rendering it by "supports" or "props," the "rod" being used as a "staff" rather than as a "sceptre" (comp. ch. xix. 14; Jer. xliii. 8; xlviii. 17). **The pomp of her strength.** The phrase meets us again in ch. xxxiii. 28, and includes what we speak of as the parade of power, here probably with a view to the foreign forces that garrisoned both Daphne and Pelusium. The daughters may be literally *the women* of the city, who were to share the usual fate of their sex on the capture of a city; or as in ch. xxvi. 6, 8; or probably as in ch. xvi. 53, 55, for the villages and towns dependent on the strong city. On the whole, looking to the mention of the "young men" in ver. 17, the literal meaning seems preferable.

Ver. 20.—**In the eleventh year**, etc. Assuming that the whole section, ch. xxix. 17—xxx. 19, were a later insertion, that which follows was written in April, B.C. 586. Its contents show that it was written at or about the time of the abortive attempt of Pharaoh-Hophra to come to the relief of Jerusalem (Jer. xxxiv. 21; xxxvii. 5—7). This was the breaking of the arm of Egypt, of which the next verse speaks.

Ver. 21.—**I have broken the arm.** The metaphor was in itself one of the most familiar (ch. xvii. 9; xxii. 6; 1 Sam. ii. 31; Jer. xlviii. 25). What is characteristic in Ezekiel is the way in which he follows the figure, so to speak, into its surgical details. A man with a broken arm might be cured and fight again; but it was not to be so with Pharaoh. His arm was not to be bound with a **roller** (the equivalent of the modern process of putting it in "splints"). The Hebrew word for "roller" is not found elsewhere, and Ezekiel's use of it is one of the instances of his knowledge of surgery. The corresponding verb is used by him of the bandages or swaddling-clothes of infancy (ch. xvi. 4).

Vers. 22—24.—**The strong, and that which was broken.** The image is pressed yet further. A warrior whose sword-arm was broken might go on fighting with his left. Hophra might continue to struggle, though with diminished strength. Ezekiel's words shut out the hope of any such struggle. The left arm also should be broken as the right had been. The Chaldean king should wax stronger and stronger. The sword of Nebuchadnezzar should be as truly "the sword of Jehovah," as that of Gideon had been (Judg. vii. 18). Figuratively, he should stand before him groaning as a man wounded to the death. So in Jer. xliii. 9; xliv. 30; xlvi. 26, we have allusions to an invasion of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, which was to end in his sitting on his throne in the stronghold of Tahapanes.

Vers. 25, 26.—The imagery is slightly varied. The arms of the Egyptian king are described, not as broken, but as feeble. They hang down by his side instead of wielding the sword. **I will scatter**, etc. The prophet dwells once more, repeating the very words of ver. 23 and ch. xxix. 12 with all the emphasis of iteration, on the dispersion which was the almost inevitable sequel of an Oriental conquest. There in the land of exile they should see that they had been fighting against God; and so the prophet ends the chapter with his ever-recurring formula, **They shall know that I am Jehovah** (ch. xxviii. 26; xxix. 21).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*A cloudy day.* As in the case of Tyre, the denunciation of Divine judgments against Egypt is succeeded by a lamentation for the doleful results of those

judgments. Pity follows wrath. The terrible condition that fills the prophet's mind with dismay is full of more pressing warning when it is such as to excite the deepest commiseration. The advent of Divine chastisement is always a cloudy day.

I. PROGNOSTICATIONS OF A CLOUDY DAY. The dreadful day has not yet come; but the prophet foresees it in the near future. The newspapers furnish us with weather forecasts. The prophets supplied the Jews with premonitions of approaching changes in the political and social atmosphere. We have no gifted seers to take their place in the present day. But we have hints and warnings that should aid us in this direction. 1. *The laws of God are changeless and eternal.* Spiritual meteorology may appear to be as fickle as English weather. But as clouds and rain come and go by fixed Divine ordinances, in spite of their apparent waywardness, so the darkness and storms that afflict human life are really directed by God's inflexible principles of righteousness. Therefore, if any people are in the condition that drew down clouds of judgment on Israel or Egypt centuries ago, they will assuredly repeat the dreadful process to-day. 2. *Clouds do not come without producing causes.* They seem to sail up like ships from the sea, coming and going at their own will. But we know that they are produced by certain causes. Mountains and forests attract rain-clouds. Clouds of calamity are not uncaused. Sin and folly collect the heaviest of them. Some may come in mercy, like cooling clouds that refresh the traveller who is fatigued with the heat and glare of the day; others, thunder-clouds of judgment, charged with fatal fires, are gathered by an evil condition of life. When the cause is present we may well expect its consequence.

II. THE EXPERIENCE OF A CLOUDY DAY. This would mean more in the sunny East than it seems to imply to inhabitants of our cloud-girt island. 1. *A cloudy day is dark.* Instead of the familiarly brilliant noon, men see only gloom at midday. In cloudy days of human life joy vanishes and the soul is plunged into sadness. 2. *A cloudy day obscures the heavens.* A curtain of inky clouds covers the blue sky and hides the sun. The saddest hours are those in which the vision of heaven is lost, when doubt and despair destroy our consciousness of God, when faith in the Unseen is drowned in spiritual darkness. 3. *A cloudy day blots out the beauty of earth.* The loveliest prospect is sobered and saddened in heavy weather. The whole aspect of the world is changed by a transformation of its sky. We cannot be independent of heavenly influences. Our present earthly life is coloured and shaded by our spiritual experiences. A clouded soul will see nothing but gloom in the fairest of external fortunes.

III. THE CONSEQUENCES OF A CLOUDY DAY. 1. *The cloudy day may usher in a storm.* Thus was it for Egypt and the other nations warned by Ezekiel. The cloud from the north was to burst in the troubles of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion. Threatening days may be followed by days of real calamity. God does not speak in vain. He holds the thunderbolt, and he throws it also. There are tempests of Divine wrath. "Woe worth the day" when such a tempest bursts! It will come upon every impenitent soul. 2. *The cloudy day may break in refreshing showers.* (1) Some of our most alarming prospects are accompanied by blessings in disguise. The cloud is "big with mercy." (2) Even clouds of judgment bring ultimate good. Storms clear the air. Judgments are not purely vindictive and destructive. They open the door for mercy. 3. *The cloudy day may be followed by a bright day.* No sunshine is so sweet and bright as that which follows rain. No joy is so sunny as that which accompanies a penitent's restoration.

Vers. 4—6.—*Associated calamities.* I. TROUBLE SPREADS. 1. *In the individual.* The first mischief in Egypt comes from the sword of the invader; but this is quickly followed by other ills. After Nebuchadnezzar's invasion the "abundance" is taken away, and the "foundations" are broken down. 2. *Among communities of men.* Cush follows the fate of Egypt, and other nations also fall under the wide sweep of judgment. We are members one of another, and when one member suffers all the members suffer. No people can afford to ignore the ruin of their neighbours. Selfish indifference is ultimately punished by a man's being compelled to share the sad consequences of the troubles of those whom he has neglected.

II. ASSOCIATION IN SIN WILL BE FOLLOWED BY ASSOCIATION IN PUNISHMENT. Cush was joined to Egypt in wickedness; she will be joined to the greater nation in suffering. He who walks in the way of sinners will come to the end of sinners. There is no

assurance against the fatal consequences of wickedness that can be effected by means of association. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished" (Prov. xi. 21).

III. THERE IS NO PROTECTION IN OBSCURITY. Poor Cush and Phut and Lud are obscure, unimportant, and remote. Yet they share the fate of better-known Egypt. No one can hide his sin under the cloak of his own insignificance. No ferret is so keen as a man's own sin when the time comes for it to find him out.

IV. ALLIANCE WITH GREAT SINNERS WILL NOT AFFORD ANY PROTECTION. These other nations were joined to great Egypt. But this alliance did not save them. On the contrary, the grandeur of Egypt attracted Nebuchadnezzar to their neighbourhood. Had there been no rich and famous Egypt, he would not have troubled himself to attack Cush and Phut and Lud. We gain nothing by the power or prestige of influential connections when we are called to judgment for our sins.

V. THEY ARE GUILTY OF SIN WHO AID AND ABET IT. These neighbouring nations uphold Egypt. They will share her fate. From Migdol on the Delta to the granite-quarries of Syene far away to the south on the borders of the Soudan—five hundred miles—the ruin of great Egypt will extend; it will also spread to the people who support her policy and contribute to her prosperity. He who makes others to sin is himself the greatest of sinners. Fagin the trainer of child-thieves is himself a monstrous thief, though he never steals a handkerchief with his own fingers. People who encourage opium-eating, drunkenness, or profligacy, by supporting the causes of those evils, are guilty of them. The mercenaries of Egypt share the fate of their wealthy mistress. There are too many mercenaries of sin in the present day. For the sake of gain men will carry on a business which they know is directly ministering to the ruin of their fellow-creatures. They attempt to defend themselves with the excuse that they do not force those whom they supply with the means of self-destruction to avail themselves of it. This is true; but, on the other hand, they tempt the miserable victims by affording facility for fatal indulgence. That is the sin of Satan.

Ver. 7.—*Desolation.* Egypt is to be desolate in the midst of countries that are desolate, and her cities laid waste in the midst of other ruined cities. A picture of widespread and general desolation.

I. THERE IS A DESOLATION OF LANDS AND CITIES. Having lived free from the ravages of an invader ever since the Norman conquest, we find it impossible to imagine the agonies of war among the people who suffer from them. The excitement of battle may drown those horrors for a season. But when that excitement is over, the consequent distress is deep and bitter, widespread and lasting. War is a demon of destruction. It literally ravages a country. No incursion of wild beasts from the forest, no pestilence or famine, can bring about evils equal to those of war. It is the duty of all Christian people to band themselves together into a league of peace. The war-mongers often raise cries of "British interests in danger!" The country should learn that the greatest British interest is peace.

II. THERE IS A DESOLATION OF HOMES. 1. *This happens in bankruptcy*, which is often brought about by wicked devices of cunning men. The successful promoter of a company entraps unwary people, pockets a rich premium, escapes before the crash, and leave his victims to ruin and misery. Gambling ruins multitudes of homes. If a man considered his duty to his wife and children, he would see that this terribly prevalent national vice is selfish and cruel. 2. *This happens in external prosperity.* Drunkenness makes a home desolate even before it has brought poverty, and no home can be more wretched for the children than that of drunken parents. Therefore the self-indulgence of intemperance is brutally cruel. Quarrelling desolates a home. Many a house that is envied by the ignorant for its affluence and luxury is a very prison of misery. When love departs, the best-appointed home is desolate. Dreary souls then drag out a beclouded existence among the melancholy ruins of wasted affection.

III. THERE IS A DESOLATION OF CHURCHES. 1. *This may be physical.* The Mohammedans simply stamped out the relics of a decaying and quarrelsome Christianity in North Africa—the home of Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine. The seven Churches of Asia have nearly all disappeared. If we are not true and strong in the Christian life, our candlestick will at length be taken away from us. 2. *It may be spiritual.* The

ruined abbeys of England are famed for their beauty, and few may regret their present condition when admiring the relics of architectural splendour. But there is a worse desolation for Churches than roofless naves and crumbling walls. A Church is indeed desolate when the Spirit of Christ has forsaken her. She may seem to flourish in numbers, finance, and mechanical enterprise. But in the sight of Heaven she is a mouldering ruin.

IV. THERE IS A DESOLATION OF SOULS. 1. *This may come in great sorrow.* When "the desire of his eyes" is taken from a man, how can he be other than desolate? Job was desolate indeed when his children were killed. Rizpah was desolate when she sat by the corpses of her two sons to drive off the foul birds of prey (2 Sam. xxi. 10), and Naomi when she returned to Bethlehem a childless widow. But God can comfort this desolation and fill its victim with heavenly peace. 2. *The worst desolation is in sin.* The soul is a wreck. Its very constitution is a ruin. God is driven from his seat in conscience. Here is the most dire and dreadful desolation—that of the prodigal, who feeds swine in a far country, and who would fain fill himself with the husks that the swine eat! It reaches its climax in pitiless solitude—"and no man gave unto him" (Luke xv. 16).

Ver. 9.—"*The careless Ethiopians.*" These people who were heedless of the coming danger that threatened them in common with great Egypt may serve as a type of the careless generally.

I. THE PREVALENCE OF CARELESSNESS. These "careless Ethiopians" are not rare specimens of an obscure class. We have not to go to Africa, nor to antiquity, for the like of them. The genus to which they belong is far from extinct even in this age of anxiety and energy. Note the various forms which carelessness takes. 1. *In regard to danger.* This was the condition of the easy-going Ethiopians. They would not consider the approaching danger of the Chaldean invasion. Men will not see risks to health till they suddenly break down; then they discover them, perhaps, too late. Soul-danger is ignored by thoughtless sinners. 2. *In respect to guilt.* The pilgrim felt the weight of his burden, but most of the inhabitants of the City of Destruction seem to have had no thought of their sins. Many men sin recklessly. They add up the score of guilt without a thought. 3. *In reference to duty.* Multitudes live as though they were only to be expected to please themselves. The sacred word "duty" has no meaning for them. They may be very anxious about their business and what will be profitable, but they are quite careless as to what they ought to do. 4. *In connection with other men.* Dives is careless as to the condition of Lazarus. The Church is too negligent of the state of the heathen world. In great cities people think little of their next-door neighbours. It is possible to starve in a land of plenty, and for no one to give heed till too late. 5. *In relation to God.* He is our Father and Master, and it is our first duty and our highest interest to regard his will. Yet many act as if he did not exist. They care neither for his love nor for his wrath.

II. THE EVIL OF CARELESSNESS. The "careless Ethiopians" are to share in the great deluge of general calamities that is about to sweep over the nations. Their carelessness does not protect them. Carelessness is evil on many accounts. 1. *Because of its folly.* This is more than childish. It is the stultification of mind. Man is made in the image of God, a thinking being. To renounce thought is to abdicate the throne of supremacy over the lower creation. 2. *Because of its negligence.* This carelessness is wilful. It springs from an idle refusal to take the trouble of thinking, or from an insane infatuation with superficial interests. It is our duty to consider our ways, to consider the poor, and to remember our Creator. Negligence is sin. 3. *Because of its danger.* The danger is not in any degree lessened because we decline to consider it. The recklessness of an engine-driver about red lights does not annihilate obstructions on the line. The wages of sin will be paid punctually and to the full, whether we expect the day of recompense or never anticipate it.

Observe, in conclusion, that there is a way of being saved from care. This is not to be found in carelessness, however. We can quench worldly care with trust. Other anxieties may be softened and ultimately abolished when we seriously set ourselves to seeking God's favour and doing his will.

Ver. 13.—*Destroying idols.* Egypt was a land of innumerable idols. In the general

desolation that was approaching, not only would these idols prove themselves useless protectors, they themselves would share the fate of their patrons. The idols are destroyed in the ruin of the idolaters.

I. THERE IS NO DEFENCE IN IDOLS. This is a lesson for the heathen. But not only pagans who worship images of wood and stone need to learn it; men who despise the superstitions of heathendom have their own superstitions and practise their own idolatry, and the lesson is also for such people. 1. *Every substitute for God is an idol.* What a man loves supremely and trusts in absolutely is his god. One man thus idolizes his money, believing that he has only to draw a cheque to frighten away the most dreadful calamity. Another makes an idol of his own ability, his skill, energy, or cleverness, proudly supposing that he is equal to any emergency. A third worships a theory, and imagines, say, that the general course of evolution will assuredly bring all right. A fourth idolizes his own religious experience, and, instead of trusting God, puts his faith in his own saintliness. 2. *No idol will preserve its worshipper.* Money, ability, theory, saintliness, all fail in the hour of trial, as surely as the sacred hawks and cats of Egypt proved useless in face of the march of the Chaldean army.

II. GOD WILL DESTROY IDOLS. The idols of Egypt were to be destroyed in the general havoc of the invasion. The Philistine god Dagon fell down and was broken before the ark of the Lord (1 Sam. v. 4). The false hope will be laid low. It may be done speedily; if so, we may thank God for a merciful deliverance. It may be long delayed, and not even seen during the present life. Dives lives clad in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously till the end of his days. The rich fool is not disillusioned till the very night of his death. But in the next world, if not in this, men must see things in their true light. A happier destruction of idols comes through the revelation of their vanity in the light of God's truth. This is the Christian method of iconoclasm. The missionary will do little good if he simply rails at the folly and sin of idol-worship. But if he makes men know of the existence of the one spiritual God, the idols will disappear without his taking any trouble to hew them down. Idols vanish from the soul when the vision of Christ is received.

III. THE DESTRUCTION OF HIS IDOLS IS FOR THE SALVATION OF THE IDOLATER. There is redemption in the Divine iconoclasm. Idols delude men, hold them in bondage to superstition, degrade their souls, and blot out the view of the true heavens. God, seeing a rich man worshipping gold, snatches the fatal idol away and plunges the man into poverty, that there he may learn to search for the true treasure of the kingdom of heaven. Earthly loss is often thus sent to clear away obstructions that hide us from seeing what are our souls' true possessions. But the mere destruction of idols is not itself a salvation. It is remarkable that Christian and European education is rapidly destroying the native idolatry of India; but it is questionable how far this is a gain if nothing is substituted but a hard and scornful agnosticism. When the idols are cast out of our lives, we need that the Christ shall come in and bring his new life.

Vers. 20—26.—*Broken arms.* Pharaoh's arms are to be broken, while the arms of the King of Babylon are to be strengthened. This metaphor describes the condition of the great empires that is consequent on the shock of conflict. The broken arm is suggestive of loss of power.

I. IT IS A CALAMITY TO LOSE POWER. This is felt to be so physically. So it is spiritually; for there are broken-armed Churches and broken-armed souls. 1. *Men suffer great inconvenience who have broken arms.* They cannot work. They are helplessly dependent on others. What can be a more pitiable picture of helplessness than a man with *both* arms broken? Weak Churches are helpless; *i.e.* when spiritual activity fails. Weak souls are in a miserable plight. 2. *Broken arms may be found on healthy men.* There is no disease, only the result of an act of violence or of an accident. Spiritual failure may be suddenly brought about, possibly by a sudden fall into temptation. 3. *Broken arms may be seen on strong men.* The muscle is stout, but the bone has snapped. So there are men who display great energy and resources. But they lack stamina. They cannot hold up against any strain. They have plenty of spiritual muscle, but the spiritual bones are brittle. Hence they sink into worse than a molluscous state.

II. THE LOSS OF POWER MAY COME AS A DIVINE JUDGMENT. Egypt is not only

robbed of honour, possessions, etc. Her arms are broken. She loses power. This must be a bitter trouble for a great, proud people. God punishes nations by crippling their resources. If they have not used their powers well, these are taken from them. Thus the Roman empire was weakened in its corruption. It is the same with individuals. The misused talent is taken away. Sin destroys a man's best powers. It weakens the soul; often it weakens the mind also. This result may be quite unexpected—a sudden outbreak of war, a sudden attack of paralysis, a sudden failure of spiritual power.

III. POWER GROWS WITH USE. The arms of the King of Babylon are strengthened. Muscles become stout and tough with exercise. Brains grow strong with thinking. Souls become vigorous by service. The battles of the Lord are not cruel and desolating like those of man. The soldier of Jesus Christ leaves no ruins in his wake. The martial virtues of spiritual service are without alloy. It is well to gain renown and strength in the noble warfare against the world's sin and misery. If Nebuchadnezzar, doing God's will unwittingly, is still rewarded for the service, much more shall God's true, willing servants not fail of their recompense. The best reward is not to lie on beds of ease, but to receive more strength for more arduous service and sterner warfare in the future. The wages of God's servant is to have his arms strengthened.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—"*The day of the Lord.*" There is in this expression, which occurs in various parts of this book of prophecy, a certain vagueness which is not inconsistent with grandeur and sublimity. The prophet's own mind was evidently impressed with the fact that, whilst every day is an occasion for the manifestation of the Divine presence among men, there are days which are peculiarly the Lord's, because connected in an especial manner with the purposes of the Eternal with regard to the sons of time.

I. THE DAY OF THE REVELATION OF THE LORD'S POWER. Memorable are such days as those which witness a great king's accession to the throne, a great battle deciding the fortunes of nations, the passing of a great measure affecting the welfare of millions, the sending forth of a religious mission to a heathen community. But, whilst every day upon which some grand deed is wrought, or some noble institution founded, is in a sense a day of the Lord, there are days in which Divine providence signally asserts or vindicates itself, in which the might of the Omnipotent is convincingly displayed; and such days are emphatically designated by the term employed in the text.

II. THE DAY OF THE EXECUTION OF THE LORD'S RECOMPENSE AND JUDGMENT. Judging by the language here employed by the prophet, the day of the Lord he announces seems especially of this character. "Howl ye! Woe worth the day!" are expressions which surely betoken the coming of the Lord in vengeance—"a day of clouds," "the time of the heathen." Long-deferred correction is now to be inflicted; threatenings often repeated are now to be fulfilled. Forbearance is exhausted, and the day of the Lord shall see him arise to judgment.

III. THE DAY OF THE REDEMPTION OF THE LORD'S PEOPLE. The defeat and confusion of the adversaries is accompanied by the deliverance and exaltation of the friends of God. When the day comes which shall see the destruction of Israel's foes, Israel shall go free and shall rejoice in her liberty, with the shout, "Now is the day of salvation!" "Lift up your heads, for the day of redemption draweth nigh!"

IV. THE DAY WHICH DISPELS THE NIGHT OF HUMAN MISUNDERSTANDING AND DOUBT. The day of man is the day of ignorance and of fear, and is little better than the night when compared with the brightness which God's presence brings. To Christians, the day of the Lord is the day of their Saviour's birth and coming to this world of sin. "The people which sat in darkness saw a great light." Then the errors and hopelessness of long ages were rolled away, like mists before the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in his wings.

V. THE DAY WHICH SHALL MANIFEST THE LORD'S GLORY AND FULFIL HIS PURPOSES. The day of the Lord has interest and significance for men; but the very term implies that its central meaning is not human, but Divine. The fools who have said in the

heart, "There is no God!" the hypocrites and formalists, who have professed belief in God, but to whom the meaning of such belief is limited to words; the defiant and rebellious sinners, of whom it may justly be said, "God is not in all their ways;"—all these are addressed with power, and are aroused from their infidelity, when the day of the Lord breaks upon the world, and when the Lord himself draws near.—T.

Vers. 5—8.—*The fate of the allies.* Egypt was not alone in her forgetfulness of the principles of righteousness, in her defiance of God; and she was not alone in her chastisement and desolation. She had allies, who were included by the prophet in the denunciation he was directed to utter against Pharaoh and his people.

I. POLITICAL AND NATIONAL ALLIANCES ARE OFTEN BASED UPON INTEREST RATHER THAN UPON MORAL PRINCIPLES. The weak seek the support of the strong; the strong would be stronger through the support of their neighbours. A common hope of profit and aggrandizement in many cases accounts for the leagues into which states enter with one another.

II. SUCH ALLIANCES ARE EASILY DISSOLVED WHEN THEIR OBJECTS ARE FOUND INCAPABLE OF REALIZATION. They do not deserve to endure, and as a matter of fact they do not endure. There is no guarantee of permanence in such combinations, and it is well for the world that this is so. The political centre of gravity shifts, and the instability of alliances based upon interest is made apparent.

III. CONJOINT HUMAN POWERS ARE EVER VAIN WHEN THEY OPPOSE THE PURPOSES OF GOD. Such was proved to be the case with regard to the alliances between Egypt and the neighbouring states mentioned by the prophet. "Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished." Add together as many finites as you will, and you are no nearer the Infinite; and all the resources of all the nations upon earth are as nothing, are less than the dust of the balance, when weighed against the incalculable, inexhaustible, irresistible power of the Omnipotent. "Why do the nations rage, and the peoples imagine a vain thing?"

IV. THOSE WHO SHARE IN SIN SHALL SHARE IN PUNISHMENT. "They also that uphold Egypt shall fall." "All her helpers are destroyed." The leagues of the righteous and godly shall contribute to the common strength; the measure of the Church's influence in the world is determined by the Church's unity. But as there is no cohesion in wickedness, the blow which falls dissolves the superficial combination, and overwhelms all the elements in a common destruction. Notwithstanding all recrimination, there is no escape and no consolation; confidence is destroyed, succour there is none; one ruin overtakes all.

V. A COMMON FATE IMPRESSES THE SAME LESSON UPON SOCIETY. The downfall of one proud, self-confident nation is impressive and instructive; but when a league is dissolved, and disaster comes upon those who have encouraged one another in injustice and impiety, the attention of the world is arrested, and men are the more disposed to learn how vain are all merely human projects, how unstable are all alliances based upon worldly principles, and how utterly powerless are the nations when they array themselves together against the truth, the Word, the Church, of the living God. When God arises, his enemies are scattered. There is none that can stand before him. Might is feebleness, wisdom is folly, and unions fall to pieces, when they are directed against him who is mighty to punish as he is mighty to save.—T.

Ver. 13.—*Idols destroyed.* It is well known, from the records of ancient history, and from the explorations and studies of Egyptologists of our own century, that the land of the Pharaohs was the seat of idolatry of the most deeply rooted, widespread, and at the same time most debasing and contemptible kind. It was not possible that the prophet of the Lord, in rebuking Egypt, should confine himself to the region of politics; he could not but deal with the religion and the religious practices which prevailed in the land of immemorial superstition. His words upon this matter are few, but they are clear, direct, and powerful. "Thus saith the Lord God, I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease from Noph."

I. THE VANITY AND INABILITY OF IDOLS TO HELP THOSE WHO TRUST IN THEM.

II. THE HELPLESSNESS OF THEIR DEVOTEES TO RETAIN FOR IDOLS THE ALLEGIANCE OF THEIR WORSHIPPERS.

III. THE CERTAINTY THAT PROVIDENTIAL OCCURRENCES WILL SHAKE THE CONFIDENCE OF IDOLATERS IN THEIR IDOLS, AND WILL BRING IDOLATRY TO NOUGHT.

IV. THE DIVINE PROVISION THAT, AS IDOLS ARE CONFOUNDED, THE TRUE AND ONLY GOD WILL BE EXALTED.

APPLICATION. 1. The principles underlying this prophecy are a great encouragement to all those who labour for the propagation of the gospel among the heathen; their labours shall, sooner or later, meet with a full success and recompense. 2. There is here an implicit counsel as to the replacing of idolatry by true religion. It is one thing to destroy, another thing to construct. In our Indian dominions at the present time, education is shaking the faith of the native population in their idols and idol-worship. But in very many instances, education has done nothing to supply the place made vacant by the exorcism of superstition. Hence the importance of philosophical and historical instruction in connection with Christian missions; so that provision may be made for the deep-seated needs of the spirit of man, so that a reasonable faith in the Supreme may be encouraged, and so that the evidences of supernatural Christianity may be presented in a convincing and satisfying form. It should be the aim of the Church, in her missionary capacity, to replace idolatry, not by an irrational atheism or a degrading secularism, but by intelligent and scriptural Christianity.—T.

Vers. 20—24.—*One strengthened and another weakened.* Historians chronicle the events which take place among the nations, and especially those which bring about the transference of supremacy, hegemony, from one people to another. The great empires of antiquity succeeded one another in a movement both picturesque and instructive. Ezekiel, in this passage, describes the defeat and humiliation of Egypt, and the victory and exaltation of Babylon. But he does more than this; as a religious teacher and prophet he affords us an insight into the moral, the religious, principles which underlie all political changes.

I. THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS CHANCE IN HISTORY. Men often suppose themselves to account for events when they attribute them to fortune, to caprice, to chance. But chance is no cause, it is the name for our ignorance of causes—a useful name if its signification is not transformed, and if in its use men do not impose upon themselves.

II. THE OPERATION OF DIVINELY INSTITUTED LAWS EFFECTS CHANGES IN THE PROSPERITY AND POWER OF NATIONS. Some of these laws are physical, some intellectual, others moral. They are of the greatest interest to the historian, who traces their action and interaction, their co-operation and conflict, as these are manifested in the rapid or gradual, the unobserved or conspicuous, changes which take place in the relations of great communities, and in the succession of one people to another in the development of the great drama of humanity.

III. YET TO THE THOUGHTFUL MIND LAW IN ITSELF IS INSUFFICIENT TO ACCOUNT FOR HISTORY. The mind craves, not indeed for something competing with law, but for something behind law, expressing itself by means of law. Law in its phenomenal manifestations is mere uniformity. Now, just as our actions may be accounted for on their phenomenal side by physical laws, whilst yet we know that purpose, intention, thought, do really and in the highest sense govern our actions, and that we are therefore moral and responsible beings; so in human history religion teaches us to look through facts and laws to Mind beyond them all, controlling, inspiring, and governing them all, in a word, accounting for them all. That is to say, we are taught by the prophet to see God in history. And reflection shows us how reasonable and justifiable is this view.

IV. A GENERAL DIVINE PURPOSE RUNS THROUGHOUT HUMAN HISTORY. It is God who raises one nation and humiliates another. These changes may for the most part be justified by the well-informed and thoughtful student. It is admitted that there are cases which occasion us the greatest perplexity. But the obscure must be interpreted by the plain. We should never forget that we are ignorant, short-sighted, and very fallible beings, and should avoid dogmatizing upon individual cases. But the reflecting and pious man will make a point of recognizing the Divine hand in the affairs of nations, and in the continuity of human history. This lesson has been taught most effectively by modern philosophers of history, from Herder to Hegel, and from Hegel to Bunsen.

V. OUR ACCEPTANCE OF THIS PRINCIPLE DOES NOT INVOLVE THE APPROVAL OF HUMAN PASSIONS WHICH IMPEL TO MANY HISTORICAL CHANGES, OR THE DELIGHT IN HUMAN SUFFERINGS WHICH FOLLOW UPON THEM. As a matter of fact, God in his wisdom makes use of many agencies and instrumentalities of a character which cannot be approved. The ambitions, jealousies, envies, etc., which animate nations and rulers are overruled by the Lord of all to secure ends which appear good and desirable to him. "He maketh the wrath of man to praise him." It is not for a moment to be supposed that the King of heaven takes any delight in the bereavements and desolations which befall the innocent as a consequence of those wars which are incident to the achievement of great, historically important ends. We can only reconcile much that happens with our highest view of the Divine character by remembering that God has a higher end before him than human enjoyment, and that in the execution of his purposes he is not limited by the horizon of time.

VI. ALL THE EVENTS WHICH TRANSPIRE AMONG THE NATIONS SHALL ULTIMATELY BE SEEN TO SUBSERVE MORAL AND RELIGIOUS ENDS, ESPECIALLY THE GLORY OF DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS. This is the faith of the godly, and is encouraged by revelation. Faith shall be justified. "The day shall declare it."—T.

Vers. 1—19.—*The Lord's day in Egypt.* The Lord's day is the day in which God comes nearest to men and manifests himself. Whether he will come as our Friend or as our Foe depends on our state of mind towards him. He has not abandoned the race of men. They are on trial, undergoing discipline. Now and again he comes near, either in his radiant robes of grace or in solemn aspect as an impartial Judge. Even when he approaches nations in the latter character, he gives premonitions of his coming, and this is an act of grace. In all his doings righteousness and love are sweetly blended.

I. THE CAUSE OF DIVINE JUDGMENTS IN EGYPT. This is explicitly stated, "I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause their images to cease." Idolatry is not merely a system of error; it is a fount of immorality, it is a seed-bed of moral corruption. In the realm of religion you cannot separate theory from practice. Theories of atheism to-day become habits of sensuality to-morrow. Where God is ignored, every vice will speedily appear. The depravities of Egypt had tainted all the nations round about.

II. THE SEVERITY OF DIVINE JUDGMENTS. It is impossible for the wisest man to estimate the demerit of sin. No human jurist can place a competent penalty against transgression of the Law of God. He alone who created man and imposed law can determine adequate punishments. We can leave God to do what is wise and right. Usually, the sky over Egypt is transcendently bright; *now* that clear sky shall be covered with a cloud. 1. *A foreign sword shall invade the land.* "It shall be the time of the heathen." A sharp sword wielded by a fierce enemy was ordained to mow down the people. 2. *Desolation was decreed.* So great was the decimation to be, that populous cities would be silent, and death-like desolation would prevail throughout that once prosperous land. Like the deserts which envelop Egypt round—barren and dreary—so was Egypt itself to become! 3. *Fire was to complete the overthrow.* "I will set fire in Egypt." Her mansions and cottages, built of most combustible material, would be ready food for flames; and, for lack of water, towns and villages would speedily disappear. How vulnerable on every side was this renowned empire! 4. *Her very foundations would be rooted up.* Under this language there is portrayed, not the removal of material substructions of cities, but the demolition of imperial and national foundations. The throne should be completely undermined; the government should pass into other hands. 5. *The overthrow should be coextensive with Egypt.* No part was to be excepted. Beginning at the first stronghold—the tower of Syene—the devastation should sweep throughout the land. Flourishing cities are mentioned by name as devoted to doom. One calamity shall befall one; some other calamity is prepared for another. God calls to his service ten thousand agents.

III. THE INSTRUMENT OF THE DIVINE JUDGMENT. In this case God has announced beforehand what instrument he will employ. The main leader in this great tragedy was Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon. Some good reason prevailed with God why he should be selected. To be the tool of a bad man is a great dishonour, but to do any

service for our righteous King is a substantial honour. Sometimes God has seen fit to employ material forces to execute his vengeance, as in the cases of Lisbon and Pompeii. Sometimes he has employed an angel, as when he discomfited Sennacherib, as when he smote the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Yet, if the human instrument be not himself righteous, he shall also in his turn be chastised. God gives to men rewards on earth to whom he is bound to deny the possession of heaven.

IV. THE CERTAINTY OF DIVINE JUDGMENTS. It is made sure by the testimony of Jehovah. "Thus saith the Lord;" "I the Lord have spoken it." Not even the actual overthrow of Egypt made the event more certain than it was made by the word of Jehovah. His declarations are as good as his performances. His words are deeds. As soon as he speaks the event begins to evolve, although we only perceive the final stroke. Our business, therefore, is simply to ascertain whether God has spoken; if he has, we may conclude that the word will become fact. Between his word and its fulfilment there is an iron link of necessity. It *must* be done.

V. THE COLLATERAL EFFECTS OF DIVINE JUDGMENTS. "The men of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword." Allies shall suffer along with the principal offenders. To prop up a rotten throne is a crime. Judicious care is needed in the choice of friends, whether public or private. By thoughtlessly identifying ourselves with bad men, we become "partakers of their sins." Such overwhelming judgment as this in Egypt would strike terror into the hearts of neighbours. "In that day shall messengers from me make the careless Ethiopians afraid." All who dwell in the vicinity shall be awed by the great catastrophe. If such disaster overtook the Egyptians, might it not also overtake them? Had they no sin to be chastised? If the Egyptians were unable to buy off, or resist, the foe, what could *they* do in the day of visitation? Well may all wrong-doers tremble! "When thy judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

VI. THE FINAL PURPOSE OF DIVINE JUDGMENT. "They shall know that I am the Lord." In their death they shall be convinced of a truth which they refused to acknowledge during life. In the crisis of the conflict between Jehovah and the idols men shall learn on which side the real strength lies. So is it still—when too late to reverse the course of life, too late to change character—men discover that there is a God in the earth, and that they must pass through the crucial process of judgment. Yet how slow are the nations still to recognize and revere Jehovah! What patience and forbearance doth our God show! Nevertheless, it is true—men shall confess that Jehovah is Lord. Is it not wiser to learn the lesson forthwith?

VII. SENTIMENTS PROPER TO THE NEAR APPROACH OF JUDGMENT. "Howl ye! Woe worth the day!" It is an impressive proof of the tender love of God that he employs all suitable means to warn us of the gradual approach of doom. Of him it is not true that the "gods have feet of wool." The noise of his chariot-wheels is heard in the distance. He sends messengers of various kinds in advance, to prevent, if possible, the threatened disaster. What gratitude ought to break forth from our hearts! And with what awe should we hear the thunderous tread of his footsteps! Verily, men are as the small dust of the balance compared with the majesty of God. For the creature to contend with his Creator is folly inexpressible! While yet the day of opportunity lingers, let counsels of wisdom prevail!—D.

Vers. 20—26.—*The broken arm.* It is marvellous that men do not realize as a fact how completely dependent they are upon the unseen God. In theory, the bulk of men are theists; in practice, atheists. It would produce a blessed revolution in society if believers in God's nearness lived up to their beliefs. How differently would kings and statesmen act, compared with their ordinary conduct! What a scene of order and quietness would our earth become!

I. THAT A CONFLICT BETWEEN NATIONS MAY BE REGARDED AS A PERSONAL COMBAT. The bulk of an army are tools, who, for considerations of pay, fight the battles of their sovereign king. It would often be more just, and more advantageous, if the persons who pick a national quarrel would personally and singly fight it out. Yet even the military equipment of a king is simply his arm magnified. Hence we call weapons of war arms. They are the artificial arm of the monarch. In almost every case the cause of war is a personal matter between two sovereigns, or their representatives.

The nation is expected to identify itself, willingly or unwillingly, with their sovereign, and act as his confederates.

II. THAT IN SUCH PERSONAL COMBAT THE ARM IS AN ESSENTIAL INSTRUMENT. As many animals are furnished by God with weapons of defence, so the human arm, so skilfully constructed, is man's chief instrument in battle. Without question, it was designed to serve other purposes. It is more adapted for industrial pursuits than for martial engagements. Yet, as self-existence is a law of nature, the right arm has an unspeakable value in defending one's self against a foe. In armament it is man's masterpiece. Shield and sword are reduced to uselessness unless there be a brawny arm.

III. THAT THE CREATOR OF MAN CAN WEAKEN OR STRENGTHEN MAN'S ARM AT PLEASURE. No part of man's nature has been constructed by himself. No part can be maintained in vigour by himself. He is, in every part and through every moment, dependent on his Maker. As man cannot make an arm, neither can he maintain its life and energy. The strength of that arm depends on occult forces of nerve and ligament, that man knows little about. He is just discovering some of the channels and laws through which his Divine Creator works: so far he can act with God; but still the Fount of life is in God alone. Wisely did King David recognize that it was God who "taught his hands to war, and his fingers to fight." The maintenance of vitality rests with God. Every increment of strength is due to him. His favour invigorates us; his frown makes us weak. The man of giant strength is but an infant in God's hands. Without his upholding power our arms would fall at once, paralyzed at our side.

IV. THAT IF GOD BREAKS THE ARM OF ANY COMBATANTS DEFEAT ENSUES. How completely is God the Arbiter in every battle! Very clearly, we are told, God interposes, in a hundred different ways, to decide the wage of war. If a spirit of timidity or fear fills the hearts of rank-and-file, the arm on which the monarch depended is broken. If treachery lurks in any department of the military service, or even in one man's breast, the arm of the king is broken. On the other hand, God has a sword of his own, and there are times when he places this in the hand of a combatant. There are times when God gives extraordinary strength, or skill, to a human arm. For wise reasons his assistance is not seen, his action is not discovered. Men put down the result to chance or to the fortunes of war. It is a common failing to forget God. We may always have God's strength in our arm if we will. If we keep closely at his side, and calmly do his will, he will surely be on our side if we are forced into battle. Then we shall feel that the battle is not ours; it is the Lord's.—D.

Vers. 1—3, 7.—*The day of desolation.* To what extent we are to take the prophet's description of the "woe" that was to overtake Egypt in a strictly external sense must (as said before on ch. xxix. 16) depend on our principle of biblical interpretation, together with our reading of ancient history. For the purpose of religious edification it is enough that we accept these words as a picture of the desolation to which a course of guilt, whether national or individual, may be expected to lead.

I. NATIONAL DESOLATION. Of this Ezekiel furnishes, in the whole chapter, a most graphic picture. 1. Prosperity (fulness) departs, and there is no more boast of its great population (ver. 10). 2. Violent death lays numbers of its people low; the land is "filled with the slain" (vers. 4, 11). 3. Its hope, in the person of its young men, is slain (ver. 17). 4. Its beauty, its pride, in the person of its daughters, is removed (ver. 18). 5. Its physical resources are dried up (ver. 12). 6. Its natural leaders are lost to it (ver 13). 7. Its religious institutions are broken up (ver. 13). 8. Its allies and dependencies are dragged down with it to the ground (vers. 5, 6); "its yokes are broken" (ver. 18). 9. Its people are stricken with dismay; instead of its ancient pride and pomp (ver. 18), fearfulness fills the heart of its inhabitants (ver. 13); a cloud of dire misfortune throws the whole country into dark shadow (vers. 3, 18). The final, comprehensive touch is in the language of the text. 10. Desolation in the midst of desolation. It does not appear that Egypt ever presented so desperate a scene as this; and we may understand either (1) that God, for some sufficient reason, forbore to visit the land with the last extremity of woe (see Jonah iii. 4, 10); or (2) that the language of the prophecy is to be taken as hyperbolical, and thus interpreted. But we must also understand that (3) the ultimate issue of collective (national)

iniquity is destruction, desolation; witness the cities of the plain, Nineveh, Babylon, Jerusalem. The "day" of sin and of defiance, of tyrannical power and guilty gratification may last long, but its sun is sure to set in dark clouds, and when the morrow comes, as it will come, there will be a day of dire and widespread desolation. "Woe worth the day!" when it arrives.

II. THE DESOLATION OF THE SPIRIT. 1. *In what it is found.* Spiritual desolation is experienced when all that is really precious to the human soul is broken up and has departed. When (1) the good *habits* of devotion and of virtue, formed in childhood, have become loosened and have given way; (2) the soul has lost its *faith* in the providence, the nearness, the notice, and perhaps even the being of God; (3) the man has become *separated*, both in sympathy and in action, from those with whom he once walked and worshipped; (4) *hope* of future blessedness has left the heart bare of all expectancy beyond the grave, and the future is nothing but a blank; (5) life has lost all its *sacredness*, and therefore nearly all its worth. This sad desolateness of sou culminates in (6) the loss of all *self-respect*, and in (7) the *extension* of the same spiritual waste to those who are within range of its influence; when one is "desolate in the midst of desolation." 2. *How it may be averted.* "None of them that trust in him shall be desolate," says the psalmist (Ps. XXXV. 22). The fear of God, walking in the light of his truth, communion with Jesus Christ and association with his friends and followers, the daily prayer for the restraining and the prompting influences of the Spirit of God,—this will secure the soul from loss and from decline. He who lives thus will not enter even the outer shadow of this calamity. 3. *The way of deliverance.* Men once thought that there was *no* way for a human soul to ascend from the pit of spiritual ruin to the lofty levels of holy service and sacred joy and immortal hope. We think thus no more now that *he* has spoken to us who has said, "*I* am the Way."—C.

Ver. 18.—*Broken yokes.* "I shall break there the yokes of Egypt." There are many yokes which are laid on men's shoulders from which they may well wish to be freed; and there is one yoke concerning which no such thought need be cherished for a moment. There is the yoke of—

I. HUMAN OPPRESSION. The sad story of the human race is, to a very large extent, the history of human oppression. "Man's inhumanity to man" may well "make us mourn" as we dwell upon it. And among his various cruelties and wrongs we have to give *oppression* a prominent place—political, domestic, personal oppression. It includes the denial of the rights of manhood and of womanhood, the exacting of hard and burdensome labour, or of heavy and excessive tribute, or of a dishonouring and hurtful homage, the inflicting of pain and suffering of many kinds. It seems to be in the nature of sin to harden men's hearts against one another, until they not only endure but positively enjoy the sight of the oppression they impose. Ezekiel speaks of "the yokes of Egypt." No doubt that country, in the plenitude of its power, exacted tribute, enforced labour, laid heavy burdens upon many of its own subjects or (as in an earlier time, when Israel was under its heel) on other peoples. But when the Babylonian power came up and subdued it, its hard hold on these had to be relaxed, its yoke was broken in twain. This, in the providence of God, has frequently happened. Power becomes wealthy; wealth leads to luxury and indulgence; indulgence leads to effeminacy and decline; weakness succumbs to some other power that has arisen; and then and thus its "yoke is broken."

II. THE SERVITUDE OF SIN. "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants [slaves] ye are to whom ye obey? . . . Ye were the servants [slaves] of sin" (Rom. vi. 16, 17). Sin conducts, by sure steps, to spiritual bondage; it lays a hard and heavy yoke upon the soul; it may be that of a grasping selfishness, or of an absorbing worldliness, or of a degrading vice, or of such a fatal habit as that of procrastination. But it is a hard bondage, a cruel yoke, which *must be broken* if there is to be spiritual liberty and eternal life. God, in the gospel of Jesus Christ, can and does break this deadly yoke. 1. He fills the soul with a sense of shame, and with a holy, renewing sorrow. 2. He leads the awakened soul to a Divine Saviour, in whose love and service the bond is broken. 3. He gives to the seeking, trustful soul the cleansing, liberating power of his Holy Spirit; and thus the

yoke is broken and the man is freed. There is another yoke of an entirely different nature; it is in—

III. THE SERVICE OF JESUS CHRIST. "Take my yoke," he says; "my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." In that which is the service of love and of righteousness there is real liberty and lasting joy.—C.

Vers. 21, 22, 24.—*The broken and the strengthened arm.* "I have broken the arm of Pharaoh King of Egypt;" "I will strengthen the arms of the King of Babylon." These words suggest to us three things.

I. GOD'S ACTION ON ALL THE NATIONS. God was in an especial sense "the God of Israel," but certainly not in an exclusive sense. He was, as he is, the God of all the nations. He was observing, directing, overruling everywhere. If Egypt fell, it was because he "broke the arm of Pharaoh;" if Babylon triumphed, it was because he made it strong in the day of battle. Statesmen and warriors were supposing that all events were the outcome of their policy and of their strategy; but, in fact, there was a power behind them and all their schemes, laying low or raising up, bringing into humiliation or causing to succeed. And there has been no age of the world, as there has been no part of the earth, in which the Divine hand has not been engaged either in breaking or in building.

II. THE BROKEN ARM OF INIQUITY. We may truly say that God is continually occupied in "breaking the arm" of wrong and sin. He does so in one of two ways. 1. Either by his direct active *interposition*; so touching the chain of events at one of its links, as to bring about disaster; intervening at some point by the introduction of some factor which makes all the difference in the end. 2. Or by the steadfast action of his wise and holy *laws*—those laws which compel all wrong-doing to others and all violation of what is due to ourself to lead down to weakness, to misery, to death. Iniquity often seems very strong; it is sustained by stone fortresses, by armies and navies, by high rank, by great wealth, by numbers, by deep-rooted customs, by venerable institutions. Nevertheless, it is on its way to overthrow and ruin. For God has designed to "break its arm." He may do so by unexpected means; he may take longer time than we wish he would take in the process; but he will accomplish it. He will bring Divine justice, Divine wisdom, Divine penalty, to bear upon and against it, and its power will be broken. It is a vain thing to be on the side of prevailing wrong; for if we are, God is against us, and, sooner or later, we shall "be confounded."

III. THE STRENGTHENED ARM OF RECTITUDE. It may be that God will "strengthen the arm . . . of Babylon," of some "power" or of some man who has no claim on the ground of righteousness, doing this for the accomplishment of some wise and holy purpose. But there is *no promise to unrighteousness.* Those who regard not the works nor the Word of the Lord need not expect that he will "build them up" (see Ps. xxviii. 5). It is those who fear him, who seek to do his will and to follow in the footsteps of his Son,—it is they who may hope to have "their arm strengthened," their work crowned with success, their hopes fulfilled. Not, indeed, that all good men will receive from God all that they would like to have; for we cannot "choose our own inheritance" with any deep wisdom, and it is well for us that many things on which we set our heart should be, as they are, denied us of God. But, making all needful exceptions, the soul that earnestly seeks God's face and strives to live his life will find that his Divine Lord will "strengthen his arm" by; 1. Directing his course in ways of competence and peace. 2. "Strengthening him with strength in his soul," and thus fitting him for all duty, trial, and temptation. 3. Making him the source of blessing to those whom he seeks to serve in the fields of sacred usefulness.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Ver. 1.—**In the eleventh year,** etc. June, B.C. 586. Two months all but six days had passed since the utterance of ch. xxx. 20—26, when Ezekiel was moved to expand his prediction of the downfall of Egypt into a parable which is partly a *replica* of those in ch. xvii. and xix. 1—14, and which also finds a parallel in Dan. iv. 10—14.

Ver. 2.—The parable is addressed, not to **Pharaoh** only, but **to his multitude,** *i.e.*, as in

ch. xxx. 4, for his auxiliary forces. It opens with one of the customary formulæ of an Eastern apologue (Mark iv. 30), intended to sharpen the curiosity and win the attention of the prophet's hearers or readers. It is significant that the question is repeated at the close of the parable, as if the prophet had left the interpretation to his readers, as our Lord does in saying, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Ver. 3.—**Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon.** The Hebrew text, as rendered in all versions and interpreted by most commentators, gives us, in the form of the parable of the cedar, the history of the Assyrian empire in its glory and its fall. That had passed away in spite of its greatness, and so should Egypt. The question in ver. 18 takes the place of "Thou art the man!" in Nathan's interpretation of his parable (2 Sam. xii. 7), or the *mutato nomine de te fabula narratur* of the Roman satirist. Some recent commentators, however, either like Ewald, taking the Hebrew word for "Assyrian" as describing a particular kind of cedar or fir tree, or, like Cornill and Smend, adopting a conjectural emendation of the text which actually gives that meaning (*Tasshur* for *Asshur*), refer the whole parable primarily to Egypt, and dwell on the fact that the words of vers. 10, 18 are addressed to the living representative of a great monarchy, and not to a power that has already passed away into the Hades of departed glory. The former view seems to me the more tenable of the two, and I therefore adopt it throughout the chapter. It may be admitted, however, that the inner meaning of the parable at times breaks through the outward imagery, as was indeed to be expected, the prophet seeking to apply his apologue even before he had completed it. The "cedar in Lebanon" has already met us as the symbol of a kingdom, in ch. xvii. 2. The **shadowing shroud** may be noted as a specially vivid picture of the peculiar foliage of the cedar rendered with singular felicity. **His top was among the thick boughs**; better, *clouds*, as in the margin of the Revised Version. So Keil, Smend, and others (comp. vers. 10, 14).

Ver. 4.—**The waters made him great.** The scenery is hardly that of Lebanon, but finds its counterpart in that of the Nile, perhaps also of the Tigris, with the waters of the river diverted into streams and channels by a careful system of irrigation. The cedar grew close to the river itself; the other **trees of the field** were watered only by the smaller channels, and so were inferior to it in the fulness of their growth. (For the general imagery, comp. ch. xvii. 5; Ps. i. 3; Jer. xvii. 8; Numb. xxiv. 6.)

Ver. 6.—**All the fowls of heaven.** This, as in ch. xvii. 23; Dan. iv. 9; Matt. xiii. 32, was the natural symbol of the fact that all the neighbouring nations owned the sovereignty of Assyria and were sheltered by her protection. In the **great nations** we have the parable passing into its interpretation.

Ver. 8.—**The cedars in the garden of God.** As in ch. xxviii. 13, the thoughts of the prophet dwell on the picture of Eden in Gen. ii. 8. Far above all other trees, the cedar of Assyria rose high in majesty. All the trees that were in the garden of God *envied him*. The trees specially chosen for comparison are (1) the **fir trees**—probably, as in ch. xxvii. 5, the cypresses; and (2) the **chestnut trees**, for which the Revised Version, following the Vulgate and the LXX. of Gen. xxx. 37, gives the "plane," which held a high place in the admiration of Greek and Roman writers. Of this we have a special instance in the story of Xerxes, who decorated a plane tree near the Meander with ornaments of gold (Herod., vii. 31; 'Ælicon,' v. 14; also comp. Ecclus. xxiv. 14; Virg., 'Georg.,' iv. 146; Cicero, 'De Orat.,' i. 7, 28).

Vers. 10, 11.—**Because thou hast lifted up thyself.** The second and third persons are curiously mixed; probably the former was in the nature of a warning addressed to the King of Egypt, while the latter continues the parable of the history of Assyria. For **boughs** read *clouds*, as in ver. 3. Ezekiel writes as with the feeling which led Solon to note that the loftiest trees are those which are most exposed to the strokes of the thunderbolts of Zeus (Herod., vii. 10). The Assyrian's heart was "lifted up with pride" (Isa. x. 5), and therefore he was delivered to the **mighty one of the nations**; *sc.* to Nebuchadnezzar.

Ver. 12.—**Strangers, the terrible of the nations.** We note the recurrence of the phrase of ch. xxx. 11, as pointing, here as there, to the Chaldean invaders. The branches of the tree were broken, the people of the earth no longer dwelt under its shadow (Dan. iv. 11).

Ver. 13.—**Upon his ruin.** The prophet, as it were, corrects his imagery. The birds and beasts are still there, but instead of dwelling in the boughs, they (vultures and owls, jackals and hyenas) hover and creep as over the carcase of the dead, decaying trunk.

Ver. 14.—**To the end that none,** etc. With a characteristic amplitude of style, Ezekiel preaches the great lesson of the mutability of earthly greatness. This was the lesson that the history of Assyria ought to have taught the nations of the earth, and it was just that lesson that they refused to learn. **They are all delivered to death.** The scenery

of the parable passes from Eden to Sheol, the Hades of the nations, and the prophet gives the first stroke of the imagery afterwards more fully developed in ch. xxxii. 17—32.

Ver. 15.—**I covered the deep for him.** The face of the whole world of nature is painted by the prophet as sharing in the awe and terror of that tremendous fall. Lebanon was made to **mourn** (literally, *to be black*), the waters failed in their channels, the trees (all that drink water) shuddered. They formed part, as it were, of the pageantry of woe at the funeral of the fallen kingdom. It is as if the prophet felt, in all its intensity, what we have learnt to call the sympathy of nature with the sorrows of humanity. It would, perhaps, be over-literal to press details; but the picture, in one of its features at least, suggests a failure of the inundation of the Nile, like that indicated in ch. xxx. 12.

Ver. 16.—**Shall be comforted,** etc. The Dante-like imagination of the prophet points the contrasts between the impression made by the fall of Assyria on the nations that yet survived, and on those that had already perished. The former mourn and shake with fear, for it is a warning to them that their turn also may come. On the other hand, the **trees of Eden**—the great monarchies that are already in Sheol—shall be "comforted" with the thought that yet another kingdom mightier than they has fallen as they fell (comp. Isa. xiv. 4—20; ch. xxxii. 17—32, where the thought is elaborately expanded).

Ver. 17.—**They that were his arm.** The words point to the allies, in the first instance of Assyria, and secondly of Egypt. The last words of the verse present a striking parallel to Lam. iv. 20.

Ver. 18.—**To whom art thou thus like,** etc.? As in ver. 10, the prophet passes from the past to the present, from the third person to the second, and as it were says to Hophra, "Thou art the man! all that I have said of Assyria is true of thee." **This is Pharaoh and all his multitude. In the midst of the uncircumcised** (see note on ch. xxviii. 10). As a matter of fact, the Egyptians practised circumcision, and Ezekiel must be thought of as using the term as simply an epithet of scorn.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The great cedar.* Assyria is compared to a cedar of Lebanon, which is an emblem of earthly magnificence.

I. THE CEDAR IS MAGNIFICENT. It is the favourite tree in biblical imagery to express splendour. In this respect it could be taken as a symbol of a great triumphant empire such as that of Assyria. Thus it is plainly declared that there is a splendour of this world. We are not to be surprised when we see the wicked flourishing like a green bay tree (Ps. xxxvii. 35). He may even attain to the proportions of the cedar of Lebanon. Note some of the characteristics of this magnificence. 1. *Size.* This is what first strikes one in viewing the cedar. Assyria was a big empire. Worldly success may be large. 2. *Altitude.* The cedar is not only broad-spreading. It towers high. There is an unchecked pride in worldly success. 3. *Persistency.* The cedar is green in winter. By clever devices unscrupulous people may escape many of the troubles of the true servants of God. 4. *Fragrance.* It cannot be denied that there is a certain fascination in worldly splendour.

II. THE CEDAR OF LEBANON EXCELS ALL THE TREES OF EDEN. There are points in which worldly magnificence surpasses the visible excellence of spiritual goodness. "Nor any tree in the garden of the Lord was like unto him in his beauty." The reasons for this should be considered, lest we be disappointed and confounded. 1. *The impressiveness of the external.* The cedar bulks largely before the eye of an observer, while the vine seems to creep feebly among the rocks or round its much-needed support. Yet it is the vine that yields refreshing fruit. There is a striking aspect in worldly success. Spiritual achievements do not arrest attention in the same way, because they *are* spiritual. Yet God looks not to worldly greatness, but to spiritual success. 2. *Unscrupulousness.* Men who trample on conscience take short cuts to success. It is not surprising that they outbid the conscientious in the market of the world's wares. 3. *Want of restraint.* The cedar is unpruned. It grows in wild, rank luxuriance on the unfrequented slopes of Lebanon. But the trees in the garden of the Lord are carefully pruned. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Heb. xii. 6).

III. THE CEDAR IS NOT INDEPENDENT OF SUPPLIES OUTSIDE ITSELF. "The waters made him great." If the waters were dried up, the proud tree would droop and die.

Proud men glory in their own resources. But no one can be strong and continue in vigour without receiving supplies from without. The mind must be fed with fresh knowledge, as the body with fresh food. Moreover, the success that a man seems to create for himself is largely due to favourable circumstances. If the water did not run by the root of the tree, the tree would not flourish in its magnificent state. Therefore the pride of self-sufficiency is founded on an error; and he who ignores his dependence on help from without will one day find that that help is cut off and he left to wither in despair. Men who will not acknowledge God are yet daily recipients of his bounty. While they lift their heads in worldly self-satisfaction, he is still mercifully watering their roots and giving the good things on which they build their pride. 1. This fact should teach *humility*. 2. It should excite *gratitude*. 3. It should cause *fear* in negligent self-sufficiency. 4. It should lead to *trust in God* rather than in superficial worldly advantages.

Ver. 7.—*The root and the waters.* I. THE TREE FLOURISHES THROUGH ITS ROOT. 1. *The root supports the tree.* It is the foundation. Unless the root is deep and strong the tree will fall, blown over by the hurricane or swept away by the flood. Our life needs a root, a foundation. 2. *The root brings nourishment to the tree.* It sucks in moisture from the earth and draws the rich juices of the soil up into the plant. When the roots are cut the tree must wither and die. The child's Christmas-tree looks green for the short season of festivities, but according to a common custom, being cut off without a proper root, it cannot live. There are souls that have no root in themselves (Matt. xiii. 21). They can only endure for a while. We must find supplies of spiritual nourishment if we are to persevere unto everlasting life. 3. *The root lies low.* The lordly branches of the cedar wave in the air and toss themselves proudly against the sky, but they could not thus thrive without the lowly root. Souls thrive on their humbler experiences. They grow strong in humility and trust. 4. *The root is unseen.* It lies in dark underground regions. He is but a shallow being whose every experience lies on the surface. "The *secret* of the Lord is with them that fear him" (Ps. xxv. 14). The tree will die if the root be laid bare to the sun. Spiritual experience should be decently covered, not dragged to the light and made a matter of common talk. Let the leaves and fruit be seen; keep the root in the dark. 5. *The root must press down to deep sources of supply.* If the water be far from the surface, the root must go after it. "The well is deep" (John iv. 11); then the water will be all the more cool and refreshing. It is good to press down to the deeper experiences of the Christian life.

II. THE ROOT NEEDS GOOD SUPPLIES OF WATER. 1. *It needs water.* Trees will not grow on the Sahara Desert. But a little moisture will bring vegetation. On the rare occasion of rain falling in the desert a sudden greenness appears on the sand; but the minute vegetable growth disappears as quickly as it comes, for the moisture rapidly evaporates in the heated air. Souls need the living waters. They need these waters because, like trees, they are alive. The statue does not droop in the noonday sun, because it is of stone, dead stone. There are statuesque souls that seem to thrive without any spiritual supplies, but they have no vitality in them. They are too stolid to faint. Fiery souls pine and wither when deprived of living water. 2. *It must be within reach of water.* It is nearly useless for the water to fall on the leaves if the root is not reached, but when the root is in moisture, though the leaves are covered with dust and sadly need cleansing showers, the tree will still live. We can bear heat and drought in the world if the soul's hidden roots are supplied by Divine grace. But we do not merely require superficial refreshment; we need such deep soul-supplies as shall penetrate to the roots of our being. For this purpose the roots must be near the water. Cattle can go down to the brooks and drink, but trees must be planted in moist soil. It is customary in the East to cut channels for water deflected from larger streams, that this may run among the roots of trees. The best trees grow by rivers of water (Ps. i. 3). Souls must be within reach of Divine supplies. It is not sufficient that God is gracious and that Christ can give of the water of life. We must be near the water ourselves. There must be personal appropriation. This is only possible by means of that spiritual neighbourhood which is sympathy. The use of "means of grace"—prayers, Christian fellowship, meditation on Scripture, etc.—helps to rouse that sympathy, and so to bring the roots near to the great waters.

Vers. 10—14.—*Pride humiliated.* The proud cedar is laid low. Assyria falls. The fate of this great empire gives warning for all ages. Magnificence does not secure protection.

I. PRIDE IS THE BESETTING FAULT OF WORLDLY SUCCESS. Many things contribute to the excitement of this passion. 1. *The perception of the success.* No man can thrive in a worldly way without perceiving the fact. 2. *The consciousness of power.* The greatest success is that to which a person attains by his own efforts. When he puts forth energy and finds it fruitful, he is naturally tempted to think much of himself. 3. *The attraction of the superficial.* This worldly success is but a shallow growth. But lying all on the surface, it is very obvious to the eye and appears to be much more important than it really is. 4. *The flattery of others.* Directly a man is successful a host of flatterers arise about him, some greedily expecting crumbs from his table, others slavishly adoring his worldly greatness. Now, flattery accepted makes for pride.

II. THE PRIDE OF WORLDLY SUCCESS IS A GREAT SIN IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. 1. It is *false.* The success is not so glorious a thing as the proud man imagines it to be. Moreover, it is not purely created by the man who attains to it. He takes many advantages that are given to him by Providence, and claims them as of his own making. 2. It is *ungrateful.* The gifts of Heaven are held as though their owner were under no obligation to him who sent them. 3. It is *impenitent.* The proud man will not admit his faults. He attempts to hide his sin under his success. 4. It is *selfish.* Proud Assyria crushed her subject-nations. All pride is a glorification of self, too often at the expense of others. Pride excludes love. 5. It is *worldly.* This pride is simply concerned with earthly success. It shuts out all contemplation of the spiritual and the eternal. Thus it beclouds the view of heaven and destroys the reverence that should be felt for God; it lowers the soul while it exalts self-esteem.

III. THIS PRIDE WILL BRING ITS OWN DOWNFALL. Because the cedar has lifted himself up in height, God has delivered him into the hands of the mighty one. 1. *This is a Divine judgment.* God is higher than the highest. He has power over the greatest. No pride can assert itself successfully in face of his wrath. At a touch from the hand of God the grandest pretensions crumble to dust. Empires topple to the earth at a glance from the Almighty. 2. *This is brought about through the direct working of pride.* It acts inwardly on the proud man and compasses his ruin. The height and breadth of the majestic cedar make it a prey to the whirlwind. The tall tree attracts the lightning. The rich man is waylaid by thieves, who neglect the poor man and so leave him in safety. The successful man is an object of envy. But pride increases the danger tenfold. It destroys sympathy and excites animosity. It also throws a man off his guard, making him think himself safe from attack or strong to defend himself. The false sense of security which it induces lays a snare for the man who harbours it.

Our safety lies in the opposite direction—in humility, confession of sin, and trust in the pardoning, protecting grace of God.

Ver. 18.—*The disappearance of Eden.* The downfall of Assyria is compared to the falling of a great cedar, and the shock that this event produces among the nations is likened to the shaking of neighbouring trees when the cedar is laid low. The cedar disappears, as Eden has disappeared. The poetic image suggests more than that the tree lies prone on the ground. It pictures it sinking into the earth and passing out of sight, as it supposes the trees of Eden to have done before. This striking idea of the old Paradise going down into the depths of the earth—like an enchanted garden that sinks at the magician's wand, and leaves only a desolate wilderness on its site—seems to be referred to by Ezekiel as a prevalent popular notion.

I. EDEN HAS DISAPPEARED. According to the account in Genesis, man was expelled from the garden, but the garden itself was not laid waste or removed. On the contrary, flaming swords kept man from re-entering its coveted precincts. But we see no garden of Eden. Geographers search in vain for its situation on the map. The old Eden has vanished. This is not the only charm of the world's childhood that has passed away. Primitive innocence has disappeared. The unfading flowers and unblighted fruit of the Eden of soul-purity have vanished from off the earth. The fresh strong imagination of the world's childhood has passed away. Our later age produces no 'Iliad.'

II. EDEN CANNOT BE RECOVERED. The fair garden that has descended into the earth

will never rise again. Beneath the ground the miner finds vast remains of primeval forests. These Edens of the past have become coal-fields. Never again can they be green and fruitful gardens. Primitive innocence can never be restored. The child-mind, once lost, cannot be had back again. There are irreparable losses.

III. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS BETTER THAN THE GARDEN OF EDEN. The original Paradise cannot be regained. But a better Paradise is created by Christ. The earthly Paradise had its serpent lurking in the grass. The heavenly is more safe, more fruitful, more beautiful. Yet, though it is heavenly, *i.e.* in its origin and in its character, it is for the earth—it is planted in this world, and it is to be enjoyed in the present life. "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke xvii. 21).

IV. A STILL FAIRER EDEN IS RESERVED FOR THIS EARTH IN THE FUTURE. The New Testament promises a millennium. In our weary disappointments we are tempted to quench the hope of that glorious future. But if the rule and truth of Christ is to spread among all men, the blessed time must come. Then, indeed, the dead Eden itself will be forgotten and despised in the splendour of the reign of Christ.

V. THERE IS A PARADISE FOR THE BLESSED DEAD. Jesus promised it for the crucified robber. "To-day shalt thou be with me in *Paradise*" (Luke xxiii. 43). Old Eden goes down. The beauty and pomp of earth descend. But the spirits of Christ's people ascend. They do not go down to the grave with their bodies, and their Paradise is not beneath, but above. Heaven is the eternal Eden of souls.

"There everlasting spring abides,
And never-withering flowers."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The greatness of Assyria.* The Prophet Ezekiel, in witnessing against Pharaoh and Egypt, inculcated the lesson with all the more emphasis by the help of an historic parallel. He has to remind Egypt that, great as is her power, there have been powers as great as she that have been brought low. The consequences of national pride and self-confidence, the downfall and destruction of the mighty, may be learnt by considering the history and the fate of Assyria. References to the kingdom of which Nineveh was the magnificent capital are all the more interesting and intelligible to us because of the explorations which in our own time have brought to light so many monuments of Assyrian greatness, and so many illustrations of the social, religious, and military habits of the population of that long-vanished empire. The figure under which Ezekiel sets forth the grandeur and the fall of Assyria is one beautiful in itself, and peculiarly impressive to his own mind and to those who, like him, were acquainted with the scenery of Syria. Under the similitude of a lofty and spreading cedar of Lebanon, the prophet exhibits the dignity, the strength, the vastness and beauty of the kingdom which nevertheless perished, as the monarch of the forest is felled, cast to the earth, and delivered to destruction. The figure brings before us—

I. THE MAGNITUDE OF THE ASSYRIAN KINGDOM. The noble cedar of lofty stature and spreading boughs is a striking figure of the great world-empire of which colossal vastness is considered the most characteristic feature.

II. ITS PROSPERITY. The vigour and vitality of the proud cedar of Lebanon are artistically set forth by the poet-prophet. "The waters nourished him, the deep made him to grow; her rivers ran round about her plantation," etc. So the great state throve, all circumstances concurring to enhance its prosperity, all allies and tributaries furnishing material for its growth.

III. ITS STRENGTH. The exalted stature, the multiplied boughs, the long branches, are signs of the cedar's strength; the storms may beat upon its head, but it withstands the fiercest blast, and endures whilst generation after generation admire its grandeur, and come and go. The Assyrian empire seemed of unassailable power; the sovereigns arrogated to themselves an unquestionable authority; men thought of Nineveh—"that great city"—as of a city which could never be moved.

IV. ITS BEAUTY. Fair was the cedar in his greatness, in the length of his branches, nor was any tree in the garden of God like unto him in his beauty. Evidently to the mind of the prophet there was beauty in Assyria such as no choice similitude could

exaggerate. This may not be so obvious to us as the assertion of Assyria's strength; but so it seemed to the mind of the world of old.

V. ITS INFLUENCE. This seems to be the idea conveyed by the sixth verse: "All the fowls of the heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations." A power so commanding, a position so authoritative, secured the homage of lesser states, which looked up to Nineveh for protection, and were ever ready, by flattery or by service, to minister to her greatness.

VI. ITS PRE-EMINENCE. The stature of the cedar of Lebanon was exalted above all the trees of the field. Even so, during its palmy days, Nineveh was the leader, the chief of the nations. It was long before that supremacy was questioned and disputed. Yet the day came, and Assyria fell.

APPLICATION. (1) A great nation enjoying prosperity and wielding influence is especially bound to remember whence its power is derived; and (2) to cultivate the conviction and sense of responsibility for the use made of gifts and influence entrusted to it. From God all comes, and to God the account must be rendered.—T.

Vers. 10—13.—*The penalty of pride.* The description of Assyria's power and glory is introduced by the prophet in order to give point to the account now given of that nation's tragic fate. The more majestic the cedar, the more awful its downfall, and the more affecting the desolation thus wrought. For the warning of Egypt the prophet brings to memory the fate of one of the mightiest and most famous of the kingdoms of the East.

I. THE OFFENCE. This lay, not in the greatness and the might of the nation, which were appointed by Divine providence, but in the misuse of the position attained. The language used by Ezekiel concerning Assyria is very instructive as to Assyria's sin: "His heart is lifted up in his height." It is not the gifts bestowed in which the offence is to be sought, but it is in the erroneous view taken by the possessor, and in his abuse of those gifts. When we read of the heart being lifted up, we are led to understand that the nation took credit to itself for its position and acquirements, and for the influence thus enjoyed. In fact, as our Lord has expressly taught us, the heart is the seat and the source of all sin. Especially apparent is this in the case of the gifts of national exaltation, wealth, and military power; when the hearts of king and of people are filled with pride, self-confidence, and self-glorification.

II. THE CHASTISEMENT. The tree was smitten and felled by the hand of the stranger. A foreign foe, a rival nation, was employed to humble the pride of Assyria. The mighty one of the nations (by which we are to understand the King of the Babylonians) dealt with Assyria's pretensions to supremacy, and confounded them. "Strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off." No greater calamity could have befallen the proud and boastful nation; no more unexpected disaster!

III. THE RUIN. The figurative language used to describe this, though succinct, is conclusive and appalling: "Upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the water-courses of the land," etc. The description affirms of the conquered Assyria: 1. Humiliation; for the lofty is laid low. 2. Desertion: "All the people of the earth have gone down from his shadow, and have left him." Those who praised and flattered Assyria in prosperity, in the time of adversity forsake and flout her. 3. The ruined nation becomes the prey of other peoples, who seek to profit by its fall.—T.

Ver. 14.—*The lesson for all nations.* Doubtless the immediate aim of the downfall of such a nation as Assyria has respect to the people and their rulers, upon whom the judgment comes. But there is a universal lesson intended for the benefit of all peoples throughout all time.

I. GOD INCULCATES MORAL LESSONS BY THE WORDS UTTERED BY HIS SERVANTS. His law-givers, such as Moses; his prophets, such as Ezekiel; his priests and scribes, such as Ezra, have messages of instruction, encouragement, warning (as the case may be), for all mankind in every age. And God summons the children of men to give heed to his servants when they utter their messages, prefacing them with the assertion, "Thus saith the Lord."

II. GOD ENFORCES THESE VERBAL LESSONS BY FACTS, AND ESPECIALLY BY THE EVENTS OF HISTORY. In such catastrophes as the downfall of Assyria, as the siege of Jerusalem, as the destruction of Tyre, as the humiliation of Egypt, the eternal, righteous, and omnipotent Ruler of mankind speaks to his subjects with an authoritative and unmistakable voice. Facts embody principles. Historical incidents elucidate moral laws. Judgments enforce commands.

III. THE WONDER OF MEN'S INSENSIBILITY TO THESE LESSONS. It might be expected that those upon whom the message of the herald produces no impression would be roused from their apathy by the stirring incidents of political change and national disaster. But, as a matter of fact, multitudes are unaffected even by the downfall of a city, the revolution of a government, the displacement of a dynasty, the transference of the balance of power among the nations. Is not this in accordance with Christ's own words, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead"?

IV. THE FOLLY AND PENALTY OF INDIFFERENCE TO THESE LESSONS. They who give heed to Divine counsels, who profit by Divine admonitions, deliver their soul in the day of trouble and temptation. But they who hear unmoved, incredulous, unresponsive, the solemn and faithful appeals of God, uttered as with a voice of thunder in the events that befall the nations of mankind, by their conduct aggravate their guilt and pen their own condemnation.

V. THE WISDOM OF IMMEDIATE ATTENTION TO THESE LESSONS, WITH THE PROPER FRUITS OF SUCH ATTENTION IN REPENTANCE AND OBEDIENCE. The parable was spoken, the providential interposition was recounted, "To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves." "He that hath an ear, let him hear."—T.

Vers. 15—17.—*Mourning and lamentation.* The description here given of the distress and mourning which took place upon the occasion of the downfall of Assyria is very poetical, and might appear exaggerated were we not able, by the aid of imagination, to place ourselves in the position of an observer at that critical epoch in the history of the world. It was necessary that Pharaoh and his people should be enabled to enter into the fate of Assyria in order that they might learn the warning intended to be conveyed by that awful event. It was the aim of Ezekiel to portray Assyria in all her glory and in all her desolation, in order to impress upon the Egyptians the lesson which at that conjuncture it was so important for them to lay to heart. The mourning raised over the one kingdom might speedily be required by the condition of the other.

I. THE CAUSE OF MOURNING. The immediate cause was the disaster which befell Assyria and the allied and dependent nations. But to those who looked beneath the surface there was a deep-seated cause in the sin by which the mighty kingdom and its rulers brought upon themselves a fate so calamitous and irreversible. Wherever there is lamentation it may be suspected that the ultimate explanation of it is sin.

II. THE MOURNERS. The prophet speaks of the mighty rivers and the terrible ocean, of the majestic trees of the forest, as taking part in this lamentation. The nations shook at the sound of Assyria's fall, when it went down to Hades. The literal fact is this—that all spectators with intelligence to understand what had occurred, and with a nature susceptible of feeling, viewed the calamity with appreciative pity. It was a catastrophe never to be forgotten, and the compassion of those who witnessed it rose to sublimity.

III. THE EXTENT AND VASTNESS OF THE MOURNING. This is evident from the fact of the Divine intervention. "Thus saith the Lord God, I caused a mourning." There could then be nothing petty or trivial in it. Originating in the counsels of the Eternal, and diffused throughout the earth, and reaching to the gates of Hades, this lamentation was worthy of the event. And it certainly justifies us in making our own the sorrows, not of individuals alone, but of nations and of mankind. It is a Divine exercise so to sympathize. "In all their afflictions he is afflicted."

IV. THE PROFIT OF MOURNING. We are assured upon high authority that "it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting." It is a wholesome and chastening discipline of the soul. To mourn for our own faults is morally necessary. "They that lack time to mourn lack time to mend." But the case before

the reader of this passage is that of mourning for the sins and the chastisement of humanity generally, and especially of the nations with whose experience we are personally conversant. A common sorrow binds hearts together, and enables men to realize their community. Grief over sin and its consequences is no inconsiderable protection against participation in the evil lamented.—T.

Ver. 18.—*Greatness no exemption from retribution.* The argument of Ezekiel is clear. His appeal is to Egypt. Having related the fall of Assyria the great, he turns to Pharaoh and to his people, and reminds them that the fate which overtook Assyria is not impossible to them. Greatness is manifestly no security against judgment. It is no sure defence against the arms of men, and no defence at all against the judgments of the almighty Ruler of mankind.

I. GREATNESS MAY AND OFTEN DOES SECURE THE ADMIRATION AND EVEN THE ADULATION OF MEN.

II. BUT EARTHLY GREATNESS IS AS NOTHING IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

III. IT IS NOT GREATNESS, BUT RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ACTION AND FAITHFULNESS TO ITS VOCATION, WHICH IS A NATION'S TRUE SECURITY.

IV. A TIME OF PROBATION COMES TO EVERY NATION, WHEN UNFAITHFULNESS AND SELF-CONFIDENCE MEET WITH THEIR DESERTS IN CHASTISEMENT AND HUMILIATION.

APPLICATION. Greatness is best shown in (1) subjection to the King of all, and (2) service and help rendered to the feebler and less favoured.—T.

Vers. 1—18.—*A terrible perdition.* Precious lessons can be learnt from God's treatment of others. As in others' conduct we may find a mirror of our own, so in others' chastisement we may find a reflected image of our own deserts. The principles on which God acts are those of eternal immutability. Therefore we may learn with certainty what will sooner or later happen. On the part of God, it is an act of genuine kindness that he holds up the perdition of one to deter others from sin. Thus he would turn the curse into a blessing—retribution into a gospel.

I. WE HAVE HERE GREAT PRIVILEGE. The Assyrian monarch is compared to a "cedar in Lebanon, with fair branches, with shadowing foliage, and of high stature." 1. *He enjoyed a position of superior elevation.* What a cedar of Lebanon was, compared to other trees, the Assyrian king was in respect to other men. He possessed superior qualities. Possibly he had larger capacity of mind, and had larger opportunities of furnishing it. Certainly he had external advantages such as no others enjoyed. He enjoyed an eminence above other men, yea more, above other kings. 2. *He received generous treatment from God.* "The waters made him great." An unfailing stream from the heavenly fount irrigated his roots. Divested of poetical form, it means that God sustained body and soul by hourly supplies of good, though his hand was unseen. If his bodily strength did not languish, it was owing to a constant stream of vitality from God. If the capacity of his mind was maintained, it was due to the Divine succour. Substantial blessing, through invisible channels, was incessantly flowing into his roots. He was entirely dependent on the kindness of another. 3. *He had a prosperous growth.* As the result of so much blessing, he grew and prospered. In himself, in his kingdom, in his reputation, he flourished. His people were loyal; his army was valiant; his empire grew. Over every province, over every department of his government, the sunshine of Heaven rested. All that a king's heart could desire he had. He was the envied among contemporary kings: "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes." 4. *Large influence was within his reach.* "All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs. . . . Under his shadow dwelt all great nations." Such a tree was not simply an image of beauty, the delight of the human eye; it was useful to various forms of life. It was a source of blessing. So with the King of Assyria. His strong government was a protection to all classes of the people. It was a bulwark against invasion. It was a shield for industry, investigation, and commerce. The rich and the poor could dwell securely. All grades of his subjects could pursue their occupations without fear of molestation. Greater influence still he might have exerted. He could have fostered learning, encouraged many arts, established peace among surrounding nations, diffused joy in a myriad homes, lifted up the nation to a higher life. Such varied usefulness is a fountain of bliss.

II. GREAT FOLLY. "His heart is lifted up in his height." 1. *Self-adulation.* To admire one's self so as to forget our Divine Benefactor is both foolishness and sin. This is to cheat God of his due. If robbery is criminal anywhere, it is specially criminal when directed against God. To interpose ourselves between God and his proper worship is grievous sin. 2. *False ground for admiration.* To find satisfaction in external rank or elevation is a sore mistake. Neither wealth, nor station, nor anything outside ourselves is a proper ground for solid satisfaction. We should find our chief delight in real excellence—in likeness to God. Else we divert our minds from substantial good, and are taken up with gaud and tinsel. 3. *Self-trust.* Pride arrogates to itself qualities and possessions which do not belong to it. It is a condition of mind we may call "self-inflation." Self-trust is ruinous, because it is reliance upon a broken reed. Human strength, apart from God, is sheer frailty. No figure can exaggerate its feebleness. It is a vapour, a shadow, a mere cobweb. Man is strong only when affiliated to God. Therefore self-trust is self-deception, is suicide.

III. A GREAT DOWNFALL. Carrying out the harmony of the figure, there is: 1. *Mutilation.* "His boughs are broken." So pitiful is God, that he does not at once destroy. He visits with partial chastisement, in the hope that repentance and amendment may be the result. If he can spare from destruction, he will. This mutilation of his beauty was a lesson he ought to have taken to heart. If a higher being than *he* could, against his will, despoil him of some of his members, could he not despoil him of all? A wise man would have halted, reflected, turned over a new leaf. This mutilation represents dismemberment, loss of territory. This outward mutilation indicates diminution of vitality: "Grey hairs were here and there upon him, though he knew it not." 2. *Scattering.* "Upon the mountains and in all the valleys his branches are fallen." Memorials of this ruined cedar were distributed far and wide. Every stream bore them on. Every storm of wind scattered them. So in the time of a nation's misfortune, fair-weather allies easily desert. As prosperity brings many superficial friends, so adversity scatters them. At such a time a hundred foes will start out of ambush to annoy, if they cannot injure. When God becomes our foe, our resources speedily waste like snow at midday. 3. *Degradation.* "Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches." In other words, he shall be treated with contempt. Those before whom he has paraded his superiority shall, in turn, triumph over him. This conduct is to many a sweet revenge. It gives to them a conviction that they too have some hidden merit which now shall come to light. This degradation in the scale of being, in the scale of society, is a bitter element in God's penalty. "He that exalteth himself shall be abased." The pendulum that has swung too far in one direction will presently swing to the other extreme. 4. *Commiseration.* "I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him." The fall of a flourishing king naturally causes consternation and concern in every palace. The self-security of others is rudely shaken. Every throne on earth seems to totter with the great vibration. Then, in noble minds, the sense of brotherhood appears. A tender tie, though often unseen, runs through the human race. The fall of one is a lesser fall to all. We all have a common interest in the fortune and destiny of humanity. 5. *Diabolic triumph.* "All the trees of Eden . . . shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth." This sense of exultation over the fall of another—whether it be latent or expressed—is base and devilish. Hence we learn that the feelings of men, in the state of Hades, is not improved by suffering: the exact reverse. Intelligent natures degenerate in hell. "Evil men wax worse and worse." Some, too, to whom the king, in prosperity, rendered signal service, will be disposed to taunt him in the day of his fall. An ingrate becomes the blackest of demons.

IV. A GREAT LESSON. "To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height." The terrible fall of the Assyrian king is used as a lesson and a warning to Pharaoh. God's judgments are stepping-stones to mercy. Over the most lurid cloud he flings the rainbow of his kindness. The darkest events may become to us fountains of blessing, if we are willing to gain the good. Thus God exhibits the strength and fulness of his love. If by any method, by any example, he can win us back from evil courses, he will. Marvellous is the obduracy of the human heart that will not yield to the charms of infinite love! The death of one may become life to many. God's aims are magnificent and far-reaching. By-and-by, he shall have

the praise which is his rightful due. If with such displays of Divine kindness men are not ashamed of their sin, they must become more hardened and more depraved than ever. "My soul, come not thou into their secret!"—D.

Ver. 7.—*The source of strength and beauty.* The "great power" of Assyria is likened in this parable to a noble cedar planted in (or transferred to) the garden of Eden, raising its head high above all the other trees in that "garden of God;" its eminence and its beauty being largely due to the fact that it was so well watered at its roots, that "the waters nourished him, the deep made him to grow; her rivers ran about her plantations" (ver. 4, Revised Version); and that "his root was *by many waters*" (Revised Version). Here we have a picture of strength showing itself beautiful, extending its influence far and wide, owing everything to the hidden source below.

I. GREAT STRENGTH. The greatness of Assyria was the greatness of national power. We are accustomed to speak of the greater nations of the earth as the "great powers." As history has shown us, such "powers" have often proved to be little better than weakness when the hour of trial came; still, in appearance, in size, in equipment, in eminence, or in reputation, they have been comparatively great and strong. Greatness, as we recognize it, is seen in national position, in physical strength and skill, in mental grasp and literary accomplishment, in art and science, in social rank, in statesmanship, in character and moral weight. In any one of these spheres a community or a man may be "great" in the sight of its (his) contemporaries.

II. GREATNESS SHOWING ITSELF FAIR. "He was fair [or, 'beautiful'] in his greatness." Greatness may be either (1) *imposing*, compelling the homage of all who behold it, instantly commanding their regard and their tribute; or it may be (2) *admirable*, such that the longer it is watched by observant and critical eyes the more it is esteemed and the higher it is prized; or it may be (3) *attractive*, of such gracious and winning mien that every one is drawn towards it and desires to come into closer association with it. There is much "greatness," or what commonly passes for such, that is distinctly unbeautiful. Possibly, indeed, it may be imposing or attractive to minds that are easily imposed upon or readily captivated; but it is devoid of all that is really excellent, and no true eye, that can distinguish the good from the pretentious, would call it *fair*. All beauty that is worthy of the name, and the only excellency that will last, is that which commends itself to the mind of the heart-searching Truth—beauty on which purity can look with pleasure, and which love can regard with genuine delight.

III. EXTENDING ITS INFLUENCE. One of its characteristics is "the length of its branches." It is the province of greatness to make itself felt on every hand, just as a noble tree throws out its branches far around its stem. This it may do deliberately and determinately; or it may do this unconsciously, as the simple and inevitable result of its own nature and life. The extension of our influence should be regarded by us, not as a right, but as a *duty* and a *privilege*. So far as we can make ourselves felt, and inasmuch as we believe ourselves to be the possessors and exponents of what is right and true, we should seek, even diligently, to "spread the branches" of our power as far as they will go. We should therefore shun all acts and extirpate all habits that tend to dwarf these branches, to diminish the influence we might be and should be exerting.

IV. THE SOURCE OF STRENGTH AND BEAUTY. This great cedar was what it was because "its root was by great [many] waters." It was *always nourished from below*. It drew its strength from its roots, and its roots found their resources in the abundant streams that never failed to water and to refresh them. Strength and beauty grow out of character, moral and spiritual, as the leaves and the branches and the stem grow out of the roots of the tree. And character must be fed by the *living streams of truth* that flow in the garden of God; not any *one* truth, nor yet one *set* or class of truths, but "*all* the truth" (John xvi. 13) which we are able to receive: our root is to be "by *many* waters." We must, if we would be the symmetrical and fruit-bearing tree we should aspire to become, take care that mind and heart are well nourished by all the truth we can gather from the great Teacher, or glean from those who spoke in his Name. Nor must we forget that, beside the root drinking in the moisture below, there are the myriad leaves drinking in the air and sunshine above. We must open all the leaves of our nature to receive the warm sunshine of the love of God, and to admit all the direct Divine influences which the Spirit of God will breathe upon us.—C.

Vers. 8, 9.—"*The garden of God.*" "The garden of God," standing, as it does, for the ideal region in which man in his perfection was placed when God was "well pleased with" him, may be taken as a picture of human society itself as it once was for however brief a period, and as it shall be again when the purposes of the Redeemer are fulfilled.

I. A REGION ABOUNDING IN FRUITFULNESS. In the first garden of God there grew every tree that was "good for food." The ideal state of human society is one in which all conceivable fruitfulness will be found; there will be ready for the hand of the Husbandman the fruits of faith, of devotion, of love, of sacred joy, of helpfulness, of calm contentment, of happy and unquestioning obedience. From all hearts and lives these fair fruits will spring.

II. A SCENE OF EXQUISITE BEAUTY. "The garden of God" must be, quite independently of all reference to Eden, a place of perfect beauty. Its trees and shrubs, its herbs and flowers, its lawns and paths must together present the appearance of perfect pleasantness to the eye. Such should, such (one day) *shall* our human societies, our communities, and our Churches be; they will be scenes where there is every form of human loveliness. There must be no unnatural monotony. As in our gardens we like to have vegetation of every possible variety of size and shape and hue, so in "the garden of God" shall there be every manifestation of moral worth, of spiritual beauty. One will not say to another, "There is no need of your particular excellence;" but each will rejoice in the manifold graces which are to be seen on every hand.

III. THE SPHERE OF HAPPY CULTURE. Our first parents were placed in Eden "to dress it and to keep it." Even "the garden of God" requires attention, planting, culture. So, certainly, does the most refined and Christianized human society. There may be much knowledge and there may be excellent habits within it, but it will always need careful and diligent culture—much seed-sowing; some weeding; some pruning and occasional transplanting. We may learn: 1. That it is better to be the humblest herb in the garden of God than the stateliest cedar outside it; better be utterly obscure in the right place than very prominent in the wrong one. 2. That each particular flower in the garden of God lends its own fragrance to the air; the garden would not be complete without it. 3. That not only does it behove us to be as a flower in the garden of God, but it also befits us to be as a gardener extending the grounds, or planting or tending within its bounds.—C.

Vers. 10—18.—*The spectacle of fallen greatness.* This very beautiful parable is suggestive of many things. The latter verses of the chapter bring the Divine meaning into full view. By the fact of the prophecy itself, we are reminded of—

I. THE DELUSION TO WHICH GREATNESS IS SUBJECT; viz. that of imagining that it is invulnerable and irremovable. The strong kingdom says, "What power will touch me to hurt me?" The strong man says, "What misfortune will overtake, what enemy will prevail against me?" (see Ps. xlix. 11). It is in the very nature of human exaltation to become foolishly assured of its own security, and to defy the assaults of time and change.

II. THE PREGNANT LESSON OF HISTORY. Egypt was now to learn of Assyria; to consider how surpassingly great she had been in her prime (vers. 1—9), and to reflect upon the utter humiliation to which she had been condemned in the retributive providence of God. We may now learn of Egypt herself, to whom this lesson was addressed, and also of Macedonia, of Greece, of Rome, of Spain, etc., that a nation may tower high and far above the others, like this parabolic cedar (ver. 5) above the trees of the garden, and yet be discrowned, be levelled to the very dust. And not only the lofty nation, but the ancient family, the proud dynasty, the titled and wealthy individual.

III. THE PENALTY OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS. It is certain that no kingdom or "power" of any kind will very long outlive its purity, its virtue, its simplicity. Two things determine its doom. 1. God will punish its pride (see vers. 10, 11, 18). 2. Iniquity begets strife, folly, inward corruption, weakness; and this must end, in time, in disaster and ruin. The seeds of death are already sown when power, either in the aggregate or in the individual man, gives way to iniquity. Without any extraordinary means, by God letting his righteous laws do their constant work, such a one is "driven away for his wickedness" (ver. 11). And the end of evil is nakedness and desertion, emptiness and misery (ver. 12). Incidental truths are here portrayed, viz.—

IV. THE UNRELIABLENESS OF HUMAN PROPS. Ver. 12, "All the people of the land have gone from his shade, and have left him." There are noble souls that will cleave to the sinking cause or to the failing man just because it *is* sinking, because he *is* failing. But their name is not legion; these are not the rule, but the exception. When the day of decadence comes, and the hour when the house is likely to fall, then expect those who have lived in the shadow of it to leave it to its fate. Nay, there will be found many of those who in the day of its strength enjoyed its hospitality that on the night of its adversity will find themselves comfortable seats upon its ruins (ver. 13). We have another trace of—

V. THE DEPTH TO WHICH GREATNESS WILL DESCEND IN BECOMING THE OBJECT OF GENERAL COMPASSION. (Ver. 15.) Once it was the province of the great power to pity the necessitous and to stretch forth its strong hand of help and healing; now it lies prostrate and is itself the object of universal commiseration. "And none so poor to do it reverence." 1. *Let human greatness beware.* It is high and uplifted in the sight of men; but beware lest its heart be lifted up in arrogance and in self-confidence; for, if that be so, or if it be allowing evil to creep into any cracks of its walls, it will call down the condemnation of Heaven, and, in time, it will meet its doom. Where other prostrate powers lie, where the humblest and commonest are stretched, "in the midst of the children of men," "delivered to death" (ver. 14), there shall it also be found, down and dishonoured. 2. *Let the holy humble-hearted be filled with a wise contentment.* How much better than the greatness which is humiliated is the lowliness which is blessed and crowned!—*blessed* with the benediction of God and man, *crowned* with the glory to which righteousness conducts and in which it ends.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Ver. 1.—In the twelfth year, etc. March, B.C. 584, nineteen months after the destruction of Jerusalem. The two sections of the chapter, vers. 1—16 and 17—32, belong to the same year, and probably, though the date of the month is not given for the second, were written within a fortnight of each other. The thoughts of the prophet still dwell upon the downfall of Egypt, and he is stirred, as by a special inspiration, to write an elaborate "lamentation" over its departed greatness. It would seem, from the repetition of the word in ver. 16, as if the elegy had originally been intended to end there. Possibly it may have occurred to the prophet that what he had written was rather a prediction of coming evil than a lamentation, and therefore needed to be completed by a second, coming more strictly under that title.

Ver. 2.—**Thou art like a young lion;** rather, with the Revised Version, *thou wast likened unto a young lion.* The two clauses of the verse stand in direct contrast to each other. Flatterers, orators, courtiers, had used the usual symbolism of the animal world. The King of Egypt was as the king of beasts. Ezekiel rejects that comparison, and likens him rather to the whale, the *dragon* (Revised Version), in the seas, *i.e.* to the crocodile of his own river (compare the use of the "dragon" for the King of Egypt, in ch. xxix 3; Isa. li. 9). Ewald and Smend, however, translate, "young lion of the nations, thou art brought to nought;" but there is no adequate reason for abandoning the Revised translation. **Troubledst the waters.** As in ch. xxxiv. 18, the act is used as the symbol of all selfish and aggressive rule, defiling the streams of righteousness and judgment. **Thou camest forth with thy rivers.** Ewald and Smend translate, "Thou didst spurt out the water," as describing the act of the crocodile when it raises its head out of the water as in the "neesings," or sneezings" of Job xli. 12, Hebrew [English version, 18].

Ver. 3.—**I will spread out my net.** The imagery of ch. xxix. 3 is repeated, with a variation as to the mode of capture. There is no evidence that the crocodile was ever taken with a net; but Ezekiel may have chosen the comparison for that very reason. What was impossible in the parable, according to its letter, was possible when it received its application.

Ver. 4.—The picture is carried out to its completion. The carcase of the crocodile becomes the prey of unclean birds and beasts. The carcase of the Egyptian greatness was to satiate the appetite of the invading hosts. Were the words of Ps. lxxiv. 14, as to leviathan being "given for meat to the people in the wilderness" floating in Ezekiel's mind (compare the strange reference to leviathan in 2 Esdr. vi. 49, 52, and in later Jewish traditions)? Greek writers describe the ichthyophagi of Africa as feed-

ing on the flesh of sea-monsters (Diod. Sic., iii. 14; Herod., ii. 69; Strabo, p. 773), and the word may possibly include the crocodile.

Ver. 6.—**I will water with thy blood.** Was the plague of the water of the Nile turned to blood (Exod. vii. 19, 20) present to Ezekiel's mind? Such an inundation of the Nile, in all its horrors, was a fit symbol of the deluge of invaders by whom Egypt was laid waste.

Ver. 7.—**When I shall put thee out**; better, with the Revised Version, *extinguish*. The verb is used of lamps in 2 Chron. xxix. 7. The change of metaphor is at first startling, but I follow Ewald, Hitzig, and Smend, in thinking that there is a traceable sequence of ideas. The "dragon of the Egyptian waters" suggested the "dragon" which was conspicuous between Ursa Major and Minor among the constellations of the heavens, and the name of which, probably derived by the Greek astronomers from a remote past, suggested that of an enemy of God (comp. Isa. li. 9). So taken, the new comparison finds a parallel in that of the King of Babylon to Lucifer, the morning star, in Isa. xiv. 12. Upon this there follows naturally the imagery of ch. xxx. 18; Isa. xxxiv. 4. As the other trees of the forest had mourned for the cedar (ch. xxxi. 15), so the other lights of heaven mourn for that particular star which has been quenched for ever (comp. for the general imagery, Isa. xiii. 10; Joel ii. 10; iii. 4, Hebrew [English version, ch. ii. 31]).

Ver. 9.—**I will also vex the hearts.** The words intensify the bitterness of the downfall. The prophet passes out of the region of metaphors into that of facts. The fall of Egypt will cause pity among the nations. They shall simply be "vexed" in heart, terrified at the thought (ver. 10) that the sword which had laid her low was "brandished" also against them.

Vers. 11—14.—**The sword of the King of Babylon,** etc. The effects of Nebuchadnezzar's invasion are now described in language which seems plain enough, but in which we may read between the lines an allusive reference to the previous symbolism. Thus in ver. 13 we are thrown back upon the thought of the "troubled waters" of ver. 2. The Nile was no longer to be troubled by the foot of beasts; the streams of justice were no longer to be defiled with a selfish corruption, but were to run smooth and calm, even as the "rivers of oil" which were the symbols of ethical blessedness (Job xxix. 6; Deut. xxxii. 13). So Ewald and Keil, for once agreeing. The rule of Nebuchadnezzar was to be a righteous rule, in spite of its severity. I am unable, however, to follow these commentators further in seeing in the words a prediction of the Messianic kingdom. The Egyptians were to "know the Lord," as the other nations addressed by Ezekiel were to know him, as a righteous Judge, not as yet as a Deliverer (comp. ch. xxviii. 26; xxix. 21; xxx. 26).

Ver. 16.—**This is the lamentation,** etc. The work of mourning for the dead was for the most part assigned to women (2 Sam. i. 24; Jer. ix. 17; 2 Chron. xxxv. 25), and is therefore appropriately assigned to the **daughters of the nations.** He hears, as it were, their wailing over the fallen greatness of Egypt, even in the solitude of Tel-Abib.

Ver. 17.—For yet fourteen days the mind of the prophet brooded over the fall of Egypt, and his thoughts at last found utterance in another lamentation, based upon that of Isa. xiv. Taken together, the two passages give a vivid picture of the thoughts of the Hebrews as to the unseen world, and we find in them the germs of the later belief of Judaism in Paradise and Gehenna. What I have called the Dante element in Ezekiel it seen here raised to its highest power.

Ver. 18.—**Cast them down,** etc. The prophet thinks of himself as not only the predictor, but the minister, of the Divine judgments. So it was given to Jeremiah (i. 10) "to root out and to pull down," and to Amos (ix. 1) to "smite" and to wound. He executes the sentence, not on Egypt only, but on the other **daughters of the famous nations,** *sc.* on the nations themselves, specially those that are named in the verses that follow.

Ver. 19.—**Whom dost thou pass in beauty?** The lamentation, as might be expected from Ezekiel's standpoint, is an illustration of irony and triumph rather than of sorrow. The question implies a negative answer. Glorious as Egypt had been, other nations had equalled her. They had passed away, and so should she. **With the uncircumcised.** The words, as in ch. xxxi. 18, suggest the thought that Israel, so far as it was faithful to its calling, circumcised in heart as well as flesh (Jer. ix. 26), had a higher and happier dwelling in Hades than the uncircumcised heathen. As the Egyptians practised circumcision, the language of the prophet had a special significance. Their place in Hades was among the heathen to whom that rite was unknown.

Ver. 20.—**She is delivered to the sword**; better, with the margin of the Revised Version, *the sword is appointed*—possibly, as Ewald suggests, with reference to the practice of burying a warrior with his sword beneath his head (comp. ver. 27). **Draw her,** etc. The command would seem to be given, so to speak, to the warders of Sheol. They are to receive the new comers and take them to their appointed place.

Ver. 21.—**The strong among the mighty.** Those already in Sheol watch the new

arrival, and make their scornful comments (comp. Isa. xiv. 9, 18), at once classing them with the uncircumcised. Had they heard, we ask, of the downfall of Egypt?

Vers. 22, 23.—**Asshur is there.** The verses that follow contain, as it were, the prophet's retrospect of the history of the past, as far as he had knowledge of it. Foremost in these is Assyria, which the prophet had already chosen (ch. xxxi. 3) as the pattern instance of a fallen greatness. There **in the sides of the pit** (*i.e.* in its remotest and deepest regions) lie the graves of the rulers surrounded by those of their subjects. They had **caused terror**, the prophet adds, with a keen irony, **in the land of the living.** They can cause no terror now.

Ver. 24.—**There is Elam,** etc. The nation so named appears grouped with Asshur in Gen. x. 22; in Isa. xi. 11 it stands between Cush and Shinar; in Isa. xxii. 6 its warriors form part of the host of Sennacherib; in Ezra iv. 9 they are named as having been among the settlers in Samaria; in Isa. xxi. 2 as joining with the Medes in the attack on Babylon; in Jer. xxv. 25 again coupled with the Medes among the enemies of Nebuchadnezzar; in Dan. viii. 2 as the province in which Shushan was situated, and therefore subject to Babylon. Jeremiah (xlix. 34—39) had uttered a special prophecy against it. From Ezekiel's point of view it might well take its place among the powers that had received their death-blow at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. **Yet have they borne their shame;** *sc.* the disgrace of being uncircumcised, and therefore taking their place with the lower circles of the dead.

Ver. 25.—**They have set her a bed.** The noun is used for the sleeping-place of the dead—the cemetery, if we trace that word to its root in Isa. lvii. 2; 2 Chron. xvi. 14. In the rest of the verse Ezekiel reiterates what had been said in ver. 24 with an emphatic solemnity. In the Hebrew, as in the English, there is a constant variation in the pronouns used, now masculine, now feminine, now singular.

Ver. 26.—**There is Meshech, Tubal.** (On the ethnological relations of the two tribes, see note on ch. xxvii. 13, and later on in ch. xxxviii. and xxxix.) Ezekiel obviously speaks of them as one of the powers that had been conspicuous in his own time, and had been, in part at least, overthrown by the Chaldean monarchy. We may probably connect his words with the great irruption of the Scythians mentioned by Herodotus (i. 103; iv. 11) as having swept over Asia even to Palestine and Egypt, in the time of Josiah, and which, after compelling Cyaxares to raise the siege of Nineveh, left traces of itself in the name of the city of Scythopolis. Many commentators find a reference to that invasion in the "evil from the north" of Jer. i. 14; iv. 6; and in Zeph. i. 13—16. They also, once the terror of the nations, are now represented by the prophet as in the shadow-world of Sheol.

Ver. 27.—**And they shall not lie with the mighty.** The words seem at first to contradict ver. 26. The LXX. meets the difficulty by omitting the negative; Ewald and Hävernick, by taking it as an interrogative, "Shall they not lie," etc.? Probably the explanation is laying stress on the word "mighty." Meshech and Tubal have a lower place in Hades; they are buried without the honours of war. Their swords are not placed beneath their heads (for the practice thus referred to, see Diod. Sic., xviii. 26; Arrian, i. 5; Virg., 'Æn.,' vi. 233). For the Scythians, who worshipped the sword (Herod., i. 62), this would be the extremest ignominy. In this way their iniquities should be **upon their bones** as they lay dishonoured.

Ver. 28.—**Yea, thou shalt be broken.** The words are obviously addressed to Pharaoh. He must prepare himself for a like doom. His place, proud as he was of his magnificence, shall be with the wild nomad hordes of Scythia.

Ver. 29.—**There is Edom, her kings and her princes.** (For the political relations of Edom at this time, see ch. xxv. 12—14.) Whatever shadow of power might yet remain to it, Ezekiel, from his standpoint, could yet declare that her greatness had departed. The exultation which the Edomites had shown over the fall of Jerusalem (Ps. cxxxvii. 7) would naturally tend to accentuate the prophet's language. The "princes" of Edom are probably identical with the "dukes" of Gen. xxxvi. 15—43 and 1 Chron. i. 51, where the word means literally the heads or captains of thousands, *i.e.* of tribes, as in Judg. vi. 15 (comp. Zech. ix. 7; xii. 5).

Ver. 30.—**There be the princes of the north.** The noun for "princes" is different from that of ver. 29, and has the sense of "vassal rulers," as in Josh. xiii. 21; Micah v. 4. So we have the "kings of the north" in Jer. xxv. 26. The fact that they are coupled wih the **Zidonians** (it is suggestive that Ezekiel names these rather than the Tyrians) points in the direction of Northern Syria, including cities like Damascus, Hamath, Arpad, and others.

Ver. 31.—**Shall be comforted,** etc. (comp. for the thought, ch. xxxi. 16). That shall be all that he will have to console him. As before, other nations were comforted by the downfall of Egypt, so Egypt in her turn finds her comfort in their downfall. All are sharers alike in the fiend-like temper which exults in the miseries of others.

Ewald and Hitzig, here as there, take the word as in the sense of "mourning over."

As to the extent and manner in which the predictions of the chapter have been fulfilled, see notes on ch. xxix.—xxxi. Sufficient evidence has been given that Egypt was probably invaded and conquered by Nebuchadnezzar. The silence of the Greek historians, and notably of Herodotus, as to any such invasion goes for little or nothing. He could not read the Egyptian records, and derived his knowledge from the priests through an interpreter. They, after their manner, would draw a veil over all disasters, and so, while he records the revolution which placed Amasis upon the throne of Hophra, he is silent as to any invasion, and does not even mention the battle of Carchemish.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2, 3.—*The lion in a net.* Pharaoh is compared both to a young lion and to a whale. The young lion has left his mark at the watering-place of the cattle. Therefore a net is spread for him, and he is entrapped.

I. THE GREATEST ARE UNDER THE POWER OF GOD. The lion is the king of beasts; the whale is the greatest sea-monster. Yet both are under the power of their Creator. Kings are subject to God. Successful rich men have not grown out of his reach. Men of great intellect are not able to outwit Heaven. The raging of the wicked will not save them. They may roar like lions; they may plunge like whales; but they cannot escape God's net and hook. We are all entirely in the hands of God. It is a miserable thing that this thought should inspire terror, a happy thing when it only encourages confidence. The lions, fierce and strong as they are, cannot save themselves from the net; but the most helpless lambs of the flock are safe under their shepherd's care. It is better to be God's feeblest sheep than as the mightiest lions of the forest in opposition to God.

II. GOD CANNOT ENDURE THE SPIRIT OF DESTRUCTION. The lion ravages the flock; even when he is not doing this deadly work, he is represented as fouling the rivers. He is in all respects a mischief-maker. Then his lordly mien will not protect him. The great heathen empires incurred the wrath of Heaven for their rapacious destructiveness. If a man is injuring his fellow-men in body or soul, he will be treated by God as a beast of prey, hunted and netted and destroyed.

III. SIN MUST BE RESTRAINED. The lion is caught in a net. There he may rage and roar to his heart's content, but he can do no more mischief. The best treatment of evil is to change the lion into the lamb. This is Christ's method. The wild demoniac sits at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. But men will not always yield to the influence of Christ. They cannot then be left at large for ever. There are two nets—a gospel net (Matt. xiii. 47) and a net of judgment. The latter is for those who have escaped the meshes of the former.

IV. SINNERS MAY BE ENTRAPPED UNAWARES. The lion would not enter the net knowingly. "Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird" (Prov. i. 17). But the net is hidden, and it ensnares its victim before he is aware of his danger. Souls are entrapped by their own sins. They fall into danger before they observe it. We cannot say that sin will go on unchecked and unpunished simply because we do not perceive any immediate signs of Divine interference. God has his hidden nets, fine as gossamer thread, strong as steel.

V. THE WORLD CONCURS IN THE OVERTHROW OF EVIL-DOERS. All the peoples help to ensnare the lion. The nations assist at the down-casting of Egypt. The selfish, cruel man may be thronged with flatterers in his prosperity. In his adversity he will be equally thronged with revengeful victims. It is a terrible thing to prepare hatred for the day of calamity. No fate excites less commiseration than that of a proud, selfish, heartless soul.

Ver. 8.—*Lights darkened.* I. MAN CANNOT DISPENSE WITH LIGHTS OF HEAVEN. He may never look up. Yet he cannot live without the light that comes from over his head. In spiritual experience there are men who ignore the light above and the very existence of the heavenly world. Yet they are not the less largely dependent on those

higher influences. If the sun were blotted out, all life on our globe would perish in darkness and cold—the world reduced to a block of silent frozen matter. If God were to withdraw, all being would come to an end.

II. THE LIGHTS OF HEAVEN ARE DARKENED BY SIN. Sin eclipses the soul's sun. It spreads black clouds between the offender and the heavenly regions. It shuts a man out from fellowship with God. This is its worst effect, though men may treat it lightly at first. The process is twofold. 1. *Man is blinded.* Though the sun shines in noonday splendour the blind man walks in midnight darkness. Now, sin puts out the eyes of the soul. It is like a red-hot iron that burns away the vision of spiritual things; then the bright lights of heaven are made black. 2. *God withdraws his brightness.* We pray that God may lift up the light of his countenance upon us. But he may do the reverse, and turn his face from us. He will not for ever display his graciousness to heedless, rebellious souls.

III. THE DARKENING ON THE LIGHTS OF HEAVEN BRINGS MANY GRIEVOUS CONSEQUENCES. 1. *Knowledge is obscured.* We cannot see truth when God's light is withdrawn or when our souls are blinded to the perception of it. "In thy light we shall see light" (Ps. xxxvi. 9). "Judicial blindness" must be a fearful fate. 2. *Joy is extinguished.* A gloomy day is depressing. Darkness brings sadness. When heaven is dark all sunshine vanishes from the soul. 3. *Life is threatened.* The soul's higher life grows sickly and threatens to pass away in the darkness of separation from God.

IV. THERE IS A DARKENING OF THE BRIGHT LIGHTS OF HEAVEN WHICH MAY COME IN THE COURSE OF THE SOUL'S DISCIPLINE. There was darkness round the cross when Jesus was dying. Then in mysterious spiritual gloom he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. xxvii. 46). Earnest souls may have times of darkness, during which the vision of heaven is obscured, seasons of deep depression, when all that once seemed most real melts into the blackness of a great doubt.

V. CHRIST BRINGS A NEW LIGHT TO BENIGHTED SOULS. If we are dark now we need not remain in gloom for ever. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isa. ix. 2). Christ came as "the Light that shineth in darkness," as "the Light of the world." Though the bright lights of heaven be made dark over us, they are not annihilated; they are but beclouded or at worst eclipsed. For all dim, bewildered, sorrow-laden souls there is the hope of light in Christ. But as sin brings on the deepest night of darkness, so it is by repentance and after-forgiveness that we can hope to see the darkness clear away and a new light from heaven arise to shine into our souls.

Ver. 9 ("I will also vex the hearts of many peoples").—*Vexation of heart.* I. THE GREATEST DISTRESS IS THAT WHICH IS CAUSED BY VEXATION OF HEART. Terrible reverses of fortune may be endured, and the millionaire may become a beggar, and yet the deepest sorrows may not be reached; for there are men who have proved themselves superior to their circumstances, and who have been able to look with a serene countenance on the wreck of their fortunes, because they have been possessed of interior sources of happiness. Bodily sickness which produces acute physical pain does not induce the greatest real sufferings. Not only have martyrs learnt to triumph at the stake, but patient, obscure sufferers have acquired peace and even joy while their bodies have been racked with torment. But when the heart is sore vexed the most terrible sorrow is felt. This may be endured amid external circumstances of affluence, and then those circumstances appear but as gilded vanities, mocking the bitter grief that lurks within. We live in our hearts, and if our hearts be sore and sorrowful, our lives are darkened with a distress that no outer comforts can cheer.

II. VEXATION OF HEART SPRINGS ESPECIALLY FROM LOSS AND DISAPPOINTMENT. We accustom ourselves to the usual, and do not grieve greatly over what we never had and never expected to possess. No man is much distressed at the thought that he is not a prince of the archangels. The simple peasant does not grieve because he is not the owner of a kingdom, as Alexander is said to have grieved because he could find no new worlds to conquer. The childless wife is not desolate as the mother whose baby has been snatched from her. The loss of the loved and the disappointment of cherished hopes are the greatest sources of vexation of heart. Now, we have all lost a great inheritance, we have missed our high Divine vocation. The sorrow of failure is at the

root of the worst heart-ache. The old weary world groans without perceiving the cause of its anguish. Clearly something is wrong, for a good Creator would not have made a world for sorrow and disappointment. The great disillusion which at some time comes to every sanguine soul, and turns May into November, must have a cause. The world has suffered a great loss; it has met with a great disappointment. The first step is to have the courage to admit the fact, and not to be living in the optimism which the first touch of reality proves to be but a dream. The next is to discover the cause and to see that the loss is the loss of God, and the failure sin.

III. CHRIST HAS COME TO CURE VEXATION OF HEART. He may not help us to retrieve broken fortunes. "To the poor the gospel is preached"—and yet they remain poor; he may not now restore health as he did during his earthly ministry. But he aims at the deepest trouble—he cures vexation of heart. To the labouring and heavy laden he gives rest. It is not his will that his people should go mourning all their days. The dim and faded life may be brightened and gladdened by the love of the great Saviour. This is possible because Christ goes to the seat of the trouble, whereas most earthly comforters have only tried to smooth away the superficial symptoms. He finds the lost God. He restores man to his missed destiny. He slays the sin that is the worm at the root of the world's life. He brings the heart-joy of life eternal in fellowship with God.

Ver. 14.—*Still waters of death.* The waters of Egypt are to settle and so to be clean. From being a highway of commerce the Nile is to become an undisturbed inland river. The water-wheels shall be still, the splash of the oar shall be no more heard. The silent river shall be left to its own peace—the peace of death.

I. SIN DESTROYS CIVILIZATION. The river is the busy scene of Egyptian life and activity. Its waters will be quiet because Egypt will lose its energy. This is represented as the consequence of the nation's wickedness. Consider how the process works. 1. *Sin is anti-social.* Civilization is the art of city-life. It is dependent on co-operation, division of labour, mutual ministries, and mutual confidence. All these things are shattered by the selfish and untrue conduct of sin. 2. *Sin is unaspiring.* Civilization presses forward; essentially it seeks an advance. Sin may be greedy and grasping, and may incline men to seize much for themselves, but it does not inspire energy for general progress. It is depressing and discouraging. 3. *Sin is essentially opposed to the laws of God.* Now, no civilization can be secure and lasting that is not based on those laws. All corrupt civilization bears within it the seeds of its own destruction. The only "city which hath foundations" is the city of God, and this is "let down from heaven," *i.e.* it is a city of which the constitution is Divine, and which embodies the idea of "the kingdom of heaven."

II. IT IS WELL THAT A SINFUL CIVILIZATION SHOULD BE SHATTERED. The East is scored with the ruins of ancient empires. To-day the scene of decay is melancholy and oppressive. Yet the sight of those old, bad empires in their flourishing days was far more sad to behold. They were seats of cruelty and haunts of vice. It is well that they have ceased to be. The hyenas and jackals that now infest their neglected temples and palaces are clean and innocent inhabitants compared with the lustful and murderous men who formerly lived there. The running sore of modern Christendom is in the condition of its great cities. The broken-down wrecks of civilization are far more degraded than the simple savages of the forest. It was good for the world that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, that great Nineveh became a lonely resort of lions of the desert, that the Egypt of the Pharaohs fell from her proud and wicked splendour. It will be well for modern civilization to be swept away if it becomes only secular, atheistic, and immoral.

III. THE RESULTS OF A SHATTERED CIVILIZATION WILL BE A PREPARATION FOR A BETTER FUTURE. The old foul Nile is to settle quietly and so become clear. Its once disturbed waters are to run smoothly like oil. These facts which occur in the list of calamities for Egypt—and rightly, because they indicate the departure of the old, busy, populous life from its banks and its surface—are nevertheless in themselves good. It is well that the river should be clear and run smoothly. The destruction of empires brings deliverance to oppressed subject races. The loss of civilization may be the gain of naturalness. There may be less wealth, but more welfare; less pleasure, but more

peace. In silence and sorrow of soul people learn to look beneath the surface of life, as the Egyptians in their desolation could look deep down into the still, smooth waters of the Nile. This may be a preparation for a holier new life in the future.

Ver. 18.—*Sympathetic sorrow.* I. SYMPATHETIC SORROW IS CALLED FOR BY THE TROUBLES OF OUR FELLOW-MEN. Ezekiel is told by God to wail for the multitude of Egypt. He had his own troubles among the disaffected Jews; but he was not to shut himself up in the selfishness of private distress. His nation was passing through a season of terrible experiences, many of his kinsfolk driven into exile, and the remaining inhabitants threatened with fresh war-cruelties. Yet, Jew as he was, Ezekiel was to find room in his heart for grief over the distresses of Egypt. It is inhuman not to be moved by a neighbour's trouble. We ought to widen the area of our sympathy, and embrace in it the interests and troubles of foreign nations. If a Jew should wail for Egypt, should not a Christian wail for the evils of the world? Mansion House funds for various successive foreign needs—Persian and China famines, etc.—are among the healthiest signs of our times, and contain a better augury of the future of England than the high price of government stock. Individually we are called upon to grieve over our neighbour's troubles.

II. SYMPATHETIC SORROW IS ESPECIALLY REQUIRED BY THE WORLD'S SIN. 1. *We should grieve more over sin than over external calamity.* The gambling of England is a more sorrowful sight than the wreckage that strews our coast after a disastrous gale. We mourn for the death of the good and noble; we should mourn more for the life of the wicked and ignoble. Drunkenness is a worse evil than pauperism. Profligacy is infinitely more deplorable than poverty. Therefore people who think themselves happy and do not seek our commiseration may most need it. 2. *We should grieve over sin rather than coldly condemn it.* The sympathizer is himself a sinner. Many who have fallen most low have been most grievously tempted; but even when the kindest charity can discover no excuse, wickedness itself should be regarded as a miserable source of grief to all right-minded people. God pitied the sinner, and sent his Son to save him. Christ wept over Jerusalem. The Christian treatment of sin is to approach it with sympathetic sorrow.

III. SYMPATHETIC SORROW IS A MINISTERING ANGEL OF MERCY. 1. *It is a source of consolation.* Sympathy may comfort when no helping hand can relieve suffering. It is much to know that we are not alone, uncared for, and forgotten. The sympathy of God is offered to every distressed son of man. This is a type and pattern of what must be in the heart of every godly man. 2. *It is an inspiration of deliverance.* To be content to wail for the troubles of others, when by any effort or sacrifice we might alleviate those troubles, is to declare ourselves no better than hypocrites. Rich people who deplore the misery of their poor neighbours, and yet do nothing to relieve the burden of poverty, are guilty of shameful inconsistency and moral untruth. If they really grieved they would relieve. The first step is to feel the troubles of our fellow-men; the next must be to do all in our power to help them. Happily in regard to spiritual troubles Christian people have a source of assistance to offer in the gospel of Christ.

Vers. 18—30.—*The world of the dead.* "The strong among the mighty" are the inhabitants of the under-world who once were kings and heroes on earth. Now those monarchs of the dead stir themselves as they see great Pharaoh coming to join their company, and prepare to give him a stately though a gloomy welcome.

I. THERE IS A WORLD WHERE THE DEAD YET LIVE. This world only appeared to be a realm of shades and desolation to the Jews of Old Testament times. For those who have not the life of Christ in them the New Testament offers a worse prospect. Yet that some world of departed spirits exists is taught in the Old Testament as well as in the New. This agrees with the almost universal belief of man in all ages and of all nations and of most religions. There seems to be implanted in us an instinct of immortality. We cannot escape from some conception of a hereafter.

II. IT IS OF SOME IMPORTANCE THAT WE SHOULD CONSIDER OUR RELATION TO THE WORLD OF THE DEAD. Religion is primarily for this life, to help us to do our daily duty. But it also bears on the future. We cannot but feel that our life is swiftly

fleeting. Every year brings us nearer to the great mystery. We know full well that every soul among us will soon solve the awful riddle of futurity. Surely, then, it is of some moment that we should stand in right relations with the world of the dead, if only we can know what those relations should be.

III. GOD RULES OVER THE REALMS OF THE DEAD. The psalmist, when meditating on the Divine omnipresence, exclaimed, "If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there" (Ps. CXXXIX. 8). 1. *Therefore it is vain to hope to escape from God by the gate of death.* The suicide is mistaken if he thinks he will elude the grasp of the great Avenger. 2. *God will maintain order and justice in the realm of the dead.* Bad souls do not descend into a Miltonic hell, ruled over by Satan and his crew, at whose mercy they must be without the interference of God. Such a pandemonium does not exist. As far as the Bible is a guide on the subject, there seems to be a solemn order in the regions of the dead. The confusion of earth does not reach the silent realms on the other side of the dark river. If we would be well dealt with there, we must be right and straight with God's justice here.

IV. THE REALM OF THE DEAD WILL BE A DOLEFUL PLACE FOR THE SINNER. The old delights will all be extinguished. The worldly store will be left behind. If the soul has no better treasure, it will be starved and beggared. The strongest and most exalted on earth will find that their power and rank are utterly gone. There kings lie low. The guilty soul will stand naked, with all its sin exposed. There will be no shelter from wrath and punishment. Christ alone can save us from this doleful prospect, by giving us his life eternal.

V. THE WORLD WILL WEAR A NEW ASPECT WHEN VIEWED FROM THE REALM OF THE DEAD. Seen from the sun, the earth must appear to be a very small planet. Many great interests, delights, and distresses of earth must seem but poor child's play to the large sad eyes of death, but spiritual experiences must seem intensely real. Yet every man will be himself still. Pharaoh is recognized. The future is linked on to the past; it will look back on the past, and gravely judge it.

Ver. 27 ("Their iniquities shall be upon their bones").—*Indelible sin.* The idea seems to be that the guilty Egyptians shall not have honourable burial like that of the kings and princes who have been laid in the tombs with their weapons of war by their side—a token that they may yet roam as great fighting heroes through the dim regions of the nether world. The Egyptians are forbidden this prospect. They who of all people cared for the preservation of the bodies of the dead, by embalming and burying in huge pyramids, are to have their bones flung in a heap like a confused mass of corpses hurriedly gathered together from a battle-field. This is a punishment of sin.

I. SIN ONCE COMMITTED REMAINS WITH THE SINNER. Our own deeds are our lasting possession. We may lose all else and still not lose them. In the exciting moment of temptation the foolish fancy is entertained that the sin may be quickly committed and then left behind. The sinner will flee from his guilt and leave it in the dark depths of some distant forest. Alas! this is impossible. The awful thing pursues its maker into the wilderness, into the city, into the sacred sanctuary of the home.

II. SIN ENTERS DEEPLY INTO THE NATURE OF THE SINNER. It is not merely a deed of the hand. If it were that only it would have no moral character. But it springs from the inner being, and it comes home to roost. Though the flesh be scraped from the bones, still the sin remains, as though cleaving to the very skeleton—it is so close a companion, its seat is so terribly centred within.

III. SIN PURSUES THE SINNER AFTER DEATH. The sinner does not carry his wealth with him, but he carries his wickedness. His estate must be left behind, his iniquity will accompany him. His body he must cast off, but he cannot cast off his sin. The man and his sin will enter into the dread world of the dead together, there to be judged by God, there to reap the consequences of their fearful partnership.

IV. NO HUMAN EXPERIENCE CAN REMOVE SIN. Iniquities lying on the very bones of the dead! Who shall tear them off and fling them away? Tears will not wash them out, for tears cannot undo the past. Amendment will not destroy them, for even if that be possible, it is wholly a thing of the future, it does not touch the record of the past.

V. CHRIST BLOTS OUT SIN THAT IS OTHERWISE INDELIBLE. He cannot deny history,

turn back the wheels of time and unknit the web of the past. But he can and he does offer pardon. When sin is forgiven God will remember it no more against the sinner (Jer. xxxi. 34). With pardon Christ also brings a new heart and life. The new inner life has had nothing to do with the old sin. It makes a fresh start unhampered with the ugly burden of the past. This great result is brought about on Christ's side by his death and resurrection (Rom. iv. 25), and on our side through penitence and faith (Acts iii. 19).

Ver. 31.—*Pharaoh comforted.* After his death Pharaoh is comforted by what he beholds of his companions in the realm of departed spirits. He sees that the great ones who preceded him are as badly off as he is. Those kings and princes were not his enemies; they were his allies. Therefore Pharaoh could scarcely gain comfort from a malignant satisfaction in seeing them degraded. Accordingly, Hengstenberg understands the passage to say that Pharaoh sighs. But might he not find some consolation in the perception that he was not alone in his calamity?

I. THERE MAY BE SOME MITIGATION OF THE FUTURE SUFFERINGS OF SINNERS. This is a dark and mysterious subject—one about which it is very unwise to dogmatize. Still, we cannot but remember that the same merciful God who rules on earth also reigns over all the realms of the dead. Certainly we have the assurance of Christ that all will not suffer equally; some will be beaten with many stripes, and others with few stripes (Luke xii. 47, 48).

II. THE JUSTICE OF GOD SHOULD BE A CONSOLATION IN VIEW OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT. God will never exceed what is right. All his dealings will be fair and equable. His aim will be to maintain goodness, not to wreak personal vengeance on his victims. We should feel that righteousness is the supreme end of all things. The vision of sin is dark and dreadful. If there be any lightening of its gloom this must be seen in the fact that the Almighty God has set his hand to destroy it.

III. THE UNIVERSALITY OF DEATH SUGGESTS THE BELIEF THAT IT FALLS IN WITH THE DIVINE ORDER OF HUMAN EXISTENCE. It may be said that, just as sin is universal through man's own fault, so death is universal as the consequence of sin. Death in its horror is associated with sin: "The sting of death is sin" (1 Cor. xv. 56). But physiologically, death belongs to the order of nature. Everything that lives dies. We regard this fact with distress when it touches our friends, and perhaps with dread when it approaches ourselves. But we should learn to trust God, who orders all things well.

"Like as the damask rose you see,
Or like the blossom on the tree,
Or like the dainty flower in May,
Or like the morning of the day,
Or like the sun, or like the shade,
Or like the gourd which Jonah had,
E'en such is man; whose thread is spun,
Drawn out, and cut, and so is done.
The rose withers, the blossom blasteth;
The flower fades, the morning hasteth;
The sun sets, the shadow flies;
The gourd consumes—and man he dies!"
(Simon Wastell.)

IV. THE DEEPEST COMFORT IN VIEW OF DEATH IS ONLY TO BE DRAWN FROM FAITH IN CHRIST. All else leaves but a desolate prospect at best. But Christ sheds a glorious light on the realm beyond. For those who trust and follow him death has lost its terrors. The grim under-world is transferred into a peaceful sleep, from which to awake in Christ. "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John xi. 25).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 2.—*The noxiousness of a sinful nation.* In order to justify the humiliation and the calamities appointed for Egypt, the prophet mentions the evil which the king and

people of that land have committed, and which an omniscient and righteous Ruler cannot possibly pass unnoticed and unrebuked. According to his metaphorical habit, Ezekiel pictures Egypt as a young and ravening lion, seizing and devouring prey; as a dragon or crocodile, troubling the waters with its feet, and fouling the rivers. Such creatures are regarded by men as noxious, and as fit to be seized and destroyed.

I. THE CAUSE OF A NATION'S MORAL NOXIOUSNESS. The ultimate cause, recognized by inquirers who penetrate beneath the surface, is estrangement from God, a spirit of rebelliousness against God, leading to the violation of Divine Law and defiance of Divine authority.

II. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF A NATION'S MORAL NOXIOUSNESS. 1. An ungodly people is its own enemy. Its irreligiousness reacts upon itself, and saps the springs of national life. 2. Its example is injurious to surrounding peoples, who are in danger of being corrupted thereby; for "evil communications corrupt good manners." 3. Mischief is done by unprincipled states by fostering discord, suspicion, and war. The weak are oppressed, and powerful rivals are provoked to hostilities. The peace of the world is ever threatened by ambitious, aggressive, and quarrelsome nations.

III. THE PUNISHMENT OF A NATION'S NOXIOUSNESS. In the figurative language of Ezekiel, the dragon is captured, dragged to the shore, and suffered to die, so that its flesh is left to be consumed by birds and beasts, and its blood is mingled with the waters of the rivers. By this it is intimated that Egypt, as a punishment for the evil and mischief it has wrought, shall be brought low, its power crippled, and its glory dimmed.—T.

Vers. 7—10.—*The sympathy of nature and of man with a fallen people.* The greatness of the catastrophe by which Egypt is to be overwhelmed is depicted by the prophet in a striking and poetical manner. It is represented that an impression is made thereby upon the heavenly bodies by which the earth is illumined, and upon the nations and kings who are astonished witnesses of the overthrow of one of the greatest monarchies of the world.

I. THE LUMINARIES OF THE DAY AND OF THE NIGHT VEIL THEIR SPLENDOUR AND WITHDRAW THEIR SHINING. The Scriptures teach us that all nature is a vehicle for the manifestation of Divine attributes, and that creation, in a very real sense, is one. Hence the sympathy appointed between nature and humanity. When men's sins are grievous, the floods cover the earth and sweep its guilty inhabitants into destruction. When the children of light strive in battle with the children of darkness, the sun stands still to prolong the hours of victory and pursuit. When the Saviour expires upon the cross, it is amidst thick darkness. When the Holy Spirit is given, it is with the rush of wind and with lambent flames. These are but some instances of the part which nature plays in human history. No wonder, then, that when the Almighty, by the hand of his servant Nebuchadnezzar, smites Egypt to its fall, the sun, the moon, and the stars should be represented as withholding their light, as weeping over the calamities of one of the greatest of human powers.

II. THE PEOPLES AND THEIR KINGS ARE AMAZED AND TREMBLE AS FOR THEIR OWN SAFETY. 1. They experience a natural compassion for fallen greatness; it is a spectacle fitted to melt every heart. Envy and hatred vanish in the presence of misfortune so appalling. 2. They feel themselves in the presence of a supernatural power, which is righteousness taking the form of judicial interposition. The consciousness of the nearness and action of such a power is enough to rouse any nation from insensibility, secularity, and unspirituality. The hand of God is seen and the voice of God is heard. The Lord himself is near. 3. They mingle with the general apprehension of the activity of supernatural justice a certain apprehension and fear with regard to themselves. Have they not shared in some measure Egypt's sin? Have they not reason to dread Egypt's punishment? Who are they that they should be exempt from the retributive justice of the Eternal? The sword is brandished before them: may it not smite them? They tremble every man for his own life.—T.

Vers. 11, 12.—*The sword the implement of Divine judgment.* The sword has been a mighty factor in human history. However peace and harmony may be the ideal state of human society, the chronicles of the past and the observation of the present

concur to assure us that there are elements in man's nature which will surely reveal themselves in hostility and in mutual ill will, in bloodshed, and in violent death. Nation rises against nation. The sword is drawn, and is only sheathed when one combatant is constrained to submit to the superior power of the other.

I. THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH THE SWORD OF THE MIGHTY CONQUEROR IS THE SWORD OF GOD HIMSELF. When the King of Babylon attacked the King of Egypt, there is no doubt he was actuated by motives of hostility, of personal ambition, perhaps of revenge. But for all this, and although he knew it not, he was the minister of God, was doing God's work, executing God's purposes. The Almighty can overrule the wrathful passions of men to bring about the objects he desires to compass.

II. THE SWORD OF THE CONQUEROR IS THE SYMBOL OF SUPREME POWER. Men talk of submitting matters to the arbitrament of the sword, implying that there is no possibility of going behind and beyond this. In all earthly government physical force is the ultimate resource; it may not be brought prominently forward, but it lies in the background, to be used when necessary. God's power controls and rules the nations; he cannot be resisted. "The nations are as nothing before him; they are counted as less than nothing and vanity;" "Let not the rebellious exalt themselves!"

III. THE CONQUEROR'S SWORD IS THE EMBLEM OF THE EXECUTION OF DIVINE JUSTICE. We speak of the sword of the magistrate, as well as of the sword of the soldier: "He beareth not the sword in vain." There is certainly no allusion in this prophetic passage to judicial functions, if they are understood to be distinct from military operations. Yet in God's hand the sword is not a weapon of violence, far less of injustice. He never smites vindictively, but always as a righteous Ruler and an impartial Judge. Even in warfare he is exercising a magisterial as well as a military office and power. His sword subdues the rebel, corrects the offender, and establishes the rule of justice, and brings about the purposes of equitable and happy peace.—T.

Vers. 17—32.—*The gathering of the guilty nations in Hades.* This vision of the poet-prophet is one of the boldest and most sublime in the whole compass of literature. As a lofty flight of imagination it excites the wonder and admiration of every reader gifted with poetical appreciation. Ezekiel is bringing to a close his prophecies regarding the nations by which the land of Israel was encompassed. How far from the narrowness and the lack of sympathy sometimes attributed to the Hebrews was the prophet of the Oriental captivity! How wide the sweep of his vision! How ready his sympathy for the fate of other peoples than his own! And, above all, how sublime his conception of the unity and the true immortality of the human race! As he was not limited by space, but interested himself in the territories and the dominions of distant monarchs, so he disdained the bounds of time, passed beyond this scene of discipline and probation, and anticipated the community of the heathen nations in the realm of Hades. There his prophetic spirit beheld Pharaoh and his people surrounded by the kings and armies and multitudes from other lands, participating in a just and common fate.

I. THE COMMON SIN OF THE NATIONS. Of all those mentioned by the prophet, it may be said that they were unfaithful to their trust, and incurred the just displeasure of the Ruler of the universe. 1. They had all forgotten God, for it is in this light that we must view their idolatry. 2. They had all sought their own aggrandizement and glory rather than the life of righteousness. 3. They had all been rapacious, violent, and unscrupulous in their treatment of neighbouring peoples.

II. THE COMMON DOOM OF THE NATIONS. It is said of one after another of these guilty states, that they were all slain with the sword, and bore their shame with them that go down to the pit, to the midst of Sheol. It is said that "their iniquities were upon their bones," by which we may understand that their sin clave to them, that they were counted responsible for it, and were required to bear the penalties attaching to it. It would be absurd to attempt a precise explanation of the poetical language of this splendid vision, which is utterly insusceptible of logical analysis. It expresses the mood of the inspired prophet; it conveys a great moral truth; it aids us in the appreciation of national continuity and vitality; it brings powerfully before our mind the amenability of governments and states to the moral law and jurisdiction of the Eternal Righteousness.

III. THE COMMON WOE AND LAMENTATION OF THE NATIONS. "Son of man," said the Lord, "wail for the multitude of Egypt." Although the nations are represented as lying still in the depths of Sheol—their swords under their heads—yet they are represented as in some measure conscious; Pharaoh of Egypt being "comforted" at the awful approach of his compeers in pride and terror, and the Zidonians as ashamed because of their sin and its recompense. Mourning and lamentation must ensue upon sin, even though during its commission there be insensibility and obduracy.

IV. THE COMMON TESTIMONY OF THE NATIONS. The fate of the colossal world-empires of antiquity has preached, in tones of power and in terms of unmistakable precision, to the after-times. These nations, in their worldly pride and in their providential fall, have taught mankind that there is but one sure foundation for a people's well-being, and that those who build upon another foundation are doomed to fall. God himself is the Source of true national life and prosperity. Where he is repudiated or forgotten, ruin is sure. Where he is honoured and obeyed, there and there only will there prevail progress and stability and peace.—T.

Vers. 1—10.—*Judgment on a proud king.* The mightiest king is not irresponsible. Although he may find no authority on earth to exercise control over him, he shall find that an unseen Power holds him in check, and chastises his oppressions. From the ubiquity of God's sceptre he cannot escape. We have here described—

I. A MONSTER OF MISCHIEF. He is represented as "a young lion of the nations," as "a whale in the seas." He is noteworthy, not for intellectual or manly qualities, but merely for animal strength and violence. This is ignoble and infamous. This is to degrade one's self. He who was created to be a ruler over the animal tribes lowers himself to be their equal. His crown is gone. To do good is worthy of a man; to do mischief is beast-like. "Thou troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their rivers." It is easy to do mischief; it is tenfold harder to do permanent good. A maniac can destroy in an hour what a man of genius has taken long years to create. The king who devotes himself to aggressive warfare lowers himself to the level of a beast. A lion of the forest does the same.

II. HIS HUMILIATING CAPTURE. "I will therefore spread out my net over thee." The man who has been a firebrand among the nations, a pestilent destroyer, God often takes, with facility, in one of his nets. In the net of bodily disease King Herod was taken—"was eaten up of worms, and died." Sometimes God captures men by means of their own vices. Their lust or their drunkenness hath slain them. Sometimes God uses the plot of a conspirator, the intrigue of a palace cabal. Sometimes God uses the simplest agency of nature, as when the snow-flakes overwhelmed Napoleon's army, and defeated his purpose. A change of wind is sufficient to capture the royal monster, as when God turned the waves of the Red Sea over Pharaoh and his host. It is the height of folly for a king to be self-willed or to lose sight of the King of kings.

III. HIS COMPLETE DESTRUCTION. "I will cast thee forth upon the open field." The figure is maintained, viz. that the dead carcase of the monster shall lie unburied in the open field. This is not spoken of the person of Pharaoh, but of his imperial power, his existence as a monarch. His rule was to be destroyed. His crown and sceptre should pass into hostile hands. Improbable as this event seemed at the moment of Ezekiel's announcement, it nevertheless came to pass. The dynasty of the Pharaohs ceased. The line of the Ptolemies occupied the throne. The improbable very frequently becomes the actual.

IV. NOTORIOUS DISHONOUR. "I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee." The extreme idea of degradation and infamy is here delineated. Men crave for posthumous fame. They yearn to have a place of honour in the memory of coming generations. For the lifeless body to be treated with insult and neglect is a perpetual dishonour. Still greater is the dishonour when precious human blood is poured out, as a worthless thing, to irrigate the soil. Herein is the old doctrine confirmed, "They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." In silent, unexpected methods God vindicates himself.

V. HIS FUNERAL DIRGE. "I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light." The inanimate objects of nature are poetically described as

sympathizing with the doleful event. Man and nature are linked together. Man's fall was felt throughout the natural world. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now." Man's recovery will be the consummation of nature's joy. "Then shall all the trees of the field rejoice;" "There shall be new heavens and a new earth." If only to give to men a livelier impression of the greatness of the disaster in Egypt, the luminaries of heaven are supposed to hide their faces in a mantle. In Egypt the light of the sun and of the moon are most brilliant. Seldom ever is a cloud seen. Hence the singular occurrence of sudden darkness would leave a deeper effect upon the human mind. The distant stars are moved by man's rise or fall.

VI. A WORLD-WIDE SHOCK. "I will make many people amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee." Pharaoh had seemed to be the highest embodiment of strength. His army had been prodigious. The desert on every side had been a rampart of defence. His power was well-established—had been of long continuance. His sceptre had wide renown. If *he* fell, who can stand? where could safety be found? A sense of insecurity shook every monarch. Every man's life seemed to tremble in a balance. Distant nations heard the news of Pharaoh's fall with bated breath. Clearly a tremendous power hovered about them, all the more to be dreaded because unseen. Each man felt that he might be the next to be stricken down. All human calculations failed. Calm self-possession, in all seasons, is the special heritage of the godly.—D.

Vers. 11—16.—*The downfall of one involves the downfall of many.* Every man is linked to society by organic ties. A king especially holds an important and responsible place. He is the key-stone of the arch. "No man liveth unto himself." He lifts others up or drags others down. He goes not to heaven, nor to hell, alone.

I. WAR IS THE SCOURGE IN GOD'S HAND. "By the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitudes to fall." Even the angry passions of men God utilizes for righteous purposes. However reluctant, the devil shall become his servant. Sin shall illustrate the splendours of his grace. His amazing power shall form and mould all things to his will. The cruel sword shall serve to establish the empire of universal peace.

II. ONE MAN'S DESTRUCTION INCLUDES TEN THOUSAND OTHERS. Every man is, in greater measure or less, a moral magnet. The fall of a great commercial house brings down to ruin smaller enterprises. The bankruptcy of an employer of labour brings loss to all his servants. If the commander-in-chief falls in battle, the entire army is weakened. If a throne is overturned, all the inhabitants of the land suffer. We are bound each to each by manifold ties, and influence each other's destiny. A sense of responsibility should lend dignity to all our words and actions.

III. HUMAN DESTRUCTION IS MEASURED IN NATURE'S DESOLATION. "I will destroy all the beasts thereof from beside the great waters;" "The country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full." Under man's care, cattle increase, and the fields become trebly fertile. But if the inhabitants are swept off by the sword, domestic cattle disappear, and wild beasts roam at large. The land, uncultivated, cannot maintain the flocks. Desolation spreads far and wide. Barrenness appears where formerly plenty smiled. The face of nature mourns in sympathy with ruined man.

IV. THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS WELL PURCHASED WITH THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS. "When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, then shall they know that I am the Lord." All knowledge is power, but the knowledge of God is power of the highest kind; it is life. To know God is practical wisdom; it is the only path to safety, elevation, and honour. If the issue of suffering, loss, or defeat in battle be to gain the knowledge of God, then, however great the outlay, the reward is amply satisfying. To know God is the way to obtain likeness to God; and this is the supreme privilege of every man. This is wealth that is abiding, joy that is eternal: honour that never fades.

V. SEVERE DISASTER BRINGS INTO VIEW THE UNITY OF THE HUMAN RACE. "The daughters of the nations shall lament her." The prosperity of a man or of a nation often excites envy. But distress awakens compassion. The sight of suffering moves into action the better part of human nature; it awakens the deepest feelings of the soul. In a time of great disaster, men forget their rivalries and hostilities, and, by

their deeds, proclaim the oneness of the human family. Such sympathy in suffering has a benign and purifying influence on human nature. The night-dew is a preparation for higher fertility and beauty in the garden, both in nature and in the soul.—D.

Vers. 17—32.—*Companionship in woe.* The prophet is a man of power. He is a king bearing an invisible sceptre. As a monarch wields only a borrowed power—a power lent by God—so a true prophet is God's vicegerent. Here he unfolds a terrible vision, the outline of a woeful reality. He leads the Egyptian king to the mouth of a vast abyss, in which lie multitudes of the vanquished and the slain. He is invited to contemplate the condition of those thus dishonoured by the King of Babylon. And he is forewarned that such will be his doom. Escape was just possible, but it was almost a forlorn hope.

I. DUTY OFTTIMES IS EXCEEDINGLY PAINFUL. God's servant is called upon to wail. He is even an agent, though a subordinate agent, in casting king and people into the abyss of death. He is under obligation to act for God. The path of duty is often severely rugged; yet no other path is smoother, though another path may *seem* to be. The course of righteousness will be in the end peace, but in the process there is strife and hard discipline. The harvest will be plentiful, but severe exertion is required, and faith is put to the strain. The pain of travail must precede the joy of young life. Through toil we pass to honour.

II. SIN ALWAYS LEADS TO TERRIBLE DEGRADATION. Sin *is* already real degradation, although very often men do not see it. But the disease will appear by-and-by on the exterior circumstance. The seed will come to the fruitage. Sin is no "respecter of persons." Even "the daughters of the famous nations"—eminent for strength and beauty—"shall be cast down into the nether parts of the earth." There shall be visible a terrible downfall, an unmitigated degradation. As the lower orders of creatures cannot sin, neither can they suffer such degradation. The balances are in the hands of supreme justice, and the hour of final retribution draws on apace.

"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small."

III. SELF-ESTEEM IS NO SAFEGUARD AGAINST JUST RETRIBUTION. "Whom dost thou pass in beauty? Go down, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised." The spirit of vanity may tempt us to say, "We are better than they. The doom of others will not be our doom." It is marvellous how men are taken in the web of self-deception. Yet no external circumstance has ever yet saved men from the effects of unrighteousness. Riches have not saved them. The beauty of Cleopatra did not protect her from a terrible doom. The honour of our contemporaries cannot save us. Posterity will easily reverse the present judgment of men, and the hand of justice will tear in pieces our flimsy reputation. Present fame may be future disgrace.

IV. ASSOCIATION WITH OTHERS WILL BE DETERMINED BY MORAL AFFINITIES. In the present state, men are associated by natural affinities and by external circumstances. But such arrangements are temporary and provisional only. Children nursed at the same breast and fed at the same table will have their final portion as separate as the poles asunder. Now kings consort with kings, nobles with nobles, poets with poets; but in the final apportionment, the righteous of every social grade will consort with the righteous; vile kings will consort with vile beggars. Earthly circumstance and pomp will have disappeared. Only moral distinctions will remain. Association in *sin* must terminate by association in *woe*. Human beings and all beings gravitate to that state for which they are fitted. No affinities are so deep and strong as moral affinities, and, though for a time suppressed, they will by-and-by be uppermost.

V. THE RUIN OF OTHERS IS IMPOTENT TO DETER FROM SIN. "The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell." If only men would be warned by the fall and ruin of others, we might hope that all future generations of mankind would be saved. There are beacons without number to frighten men away from the rocks and quicksands of peril, yet all to no purpose. We think others to be in peril, not ourselves. Alas! "the heart is deceitful above all things." Nothing will turn us away from the fascinating eye of sin but the working of almighty grace within. Beacons become to us what scarecrows do to birds—they soon cease to alarm.

VI. SELF-INFLATION IS THE PRELUDE TO ETERNAL SHAME. "They were the terror

of the mighty in the land of the living;" "With their terror, they are [now] ashamed of their might." After all, what a frail reed is the mightiest sceptre or the most martial arm! What real weakness is at the heart of him who brandishes the gory sword! Like the frog who attempted to inflate himself to the magnitude of an ox, so the paltry man who assays to play the tyrant soon collapses. One sharp prick, and the windbag soon collapses. As a child feels overwhelmed with shame when he sees in the clear light of morning the tree or the gate-post that terrified him in the darkness; so men at length discover the emptiness of the monarch, whose frown was for a moment their terror. All pretence to power and authority shall presently be hurled to the ground, ay, cast into the pit of oblivion. All real power shall abide.

VII. GOD'S TERROR IS SUPREME OVER MAN'S. "I have caused my terror in the land of the living." There is such a thing as power in the universe—an infinite power—before which it becomes every man to tremble; but this power is in the hand of God. "Jehovah reigneth, therefore let the people tremble." "Before him the inhabitants of the earth are as grasshoppers; they are like the small dust of the balance." His power is real, all-pervading, all-enduring. No being in the universe can diminish it nor resist it. Being a *real* power, it is becoming that it should inspire us with awe. The terror which tyrants and warriors awaken is only for a moment. The sham soon gets exposed. But presently the King of kings will make even tyrants shake, and the hearts of warriors melt. "Vengeance is mine," saith God; "I will repay." When Jehovah appears, tyrants hide themselves "in dens and caves of the earth."

"Fear him, ye saints, and ye will then
Have nothing else to fear."

D.

Vers. 1—10.—*God's teaching in history.* As the prophet continues his utterance in the same strain, our thought is directed to the same class of truths, and we learn—

I. THAT GREAT SINNERS ARE GREAT TROUBLERS. Egypt was a young lion among the nations, fierce, dangerous, dreaded (ver. 2). It was a crocodile in the river, "breaking forth," "troubling the waters," and "fouling" them (ver. 2). Great cities like Rome and Sparta, powerful kingdoms like Assyria and Egypt, strong men like Scylla and Napoleon, have been sad troublers of their time. They have been invaders of territory, destroyers of institutions, disturbers of domestic life. And whenever strength is found dissociated from Christian principle and the Christian spirit, there must always be grave danger of trouble. To propound their own notions, to contrive their own comfort, to extend their own influence, unprincipled or selfish men will use their strength to disturb their neighbours' peace, reckless of the good they are undoing and of the misery and mischief they are causing.

II. THAT THEY FIND THEMSELVES DEFEATED IN THE END. God spreads out his net (ver. 3), and the raging animal, the powerful fish, is taken in it. In the height of their power great nations and strong men imagine themselves to be absolutely secure, and they laugh at the designs of their enemies. But they do not know what forces are at work either within or around them; and they do not calculate that there is One who is working above them and against them. And as surely as the night follows the day, the hour of darkness will come to those who use the light of heaven to abuse their privileges and to wrong their fellow-men. Defeat and calamity await them. And sometimes it will be found—

III. THAT PALPABLE DISCOMFITURE SUCCEEDS DEFEAT. This great dragon of the deep could not be buried out of sight; its carcase was "upon the green field," "laid upon the mountains," and "filling the valleys," even "watering the land with its blood" (vers. 4—6). It could not be hidden; the ruin of the once proud kingdom should be

"Gross as a mountain, open, palpable."

Every eye should see it, every tongue should talk about it. Let men who are now prominent in power take heed lest they should become conspicuous for shame and for destitution, lest the name that is now on the lip of praise should be branded with dishonour. Unrighteousness, impurity, and selfish cruelty, when they have run their guilty and wretched course, will be held up before the eyes of men to receive the execration they deserve. The false divinity of to-day will be the fiend of to-morrow.

IV. THAT THE DISCOMFITURE OF ONE MAY MEAN THE CONFUSION OF MANY. When Egypt's light went out, the world immediately around it would be in darkness; all those who were walking in its light would be utterly benighted and confused (vers. 7, 8). If we live in no better and no more enduring light than that of a very strong but unprincipled power, we may prepare for utter darkness before long. Our light will be extinguished; we shall lose our guide, and grope our way miserably. Well it is for those who choose the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the world, that in the beams of his Divine truth they may rejoice all the day, may do their life-work, may "have light at eventide," and may be ready for a still brighter and everlasting morning under other skies.—C.

Vers. 13, 14.—*The unvisited river; or, life at a low level.* The great river appropriately represented the great nation which it enriched; and the picture of the fall of the kingdom includes the desertion of the banks of these "great waters" by man and beast (ver. 14); and also the sinking of the river itself: "Then will I cause their waters to subside" (Fairbairn's translation). Such a river as the Nile may well illustrate—

I. A NOBLE LIFE. It is a source of beauty and fertility, and therefore of enrichment, to the land through which it runs. Itself an object of delight to the eye, it is the source of verdure all along its banks. By its overflow, or through simple agricultural appliances, it waters the whole district in which it flows, and makes all the difference between barrenness and abundance. Thousands of animals drink of it and bathe in it, while the inhabitants of town and village flock to its banks in their various necessities. A noble human life may be all this in a higher sphere. 1. It may add very considerably to that spiritual worth and beauty on which Christ looks down with Divine satisfaction. 2. It may be the source of all kinds of good—of health, of sustenance, of knowledge, of wisdom, of purity, of piety; of life at its best below, of the beginning of the life eternal. 3. It is a *constant* source of blessing. As the river runs, not spasmodically, but night and day, continually sending forth its refreshing and nourishing moisture into the land, so a true, Christian life is incessantly and unconsciously communicating good, in many forms, to those around it.

II. A LIFE PITIFULLY REDUCED. A very pitiful sight would be a river in such a state as that here imagined (rather than foreseen). Instead of being what it once was, it is now to the prophet's eye a diminished stream, its waters are low (not *deep*, but *sunk*; "the verb is properly to 'sink'"), and lie far beneath its banks; and they are such that no beast cares to drink of them; no man approaches to use them for the purposes of human life, whether of nourishment or of cleansing. The river is useless, worthless, abandoned to itself. How much more pitiable is the life that has been reduced; the life *that has sunk*, that moves not any longer on the higher plane of heavenly wisdom, but only on the low and muddy levels of selfishness, of covetousness, of a base indulgence; the life that has *shrivelled up* into a poor dirty stream, no longer reflecting the beauty that is about it or the glory that is above it; the life that is *unvisited*, that no man cares to consult, by which no virtuous man directs his own, from which no man gains any strength, or impetus, or pure refreshment, which does no man any spiritual good; the life that is severely left alone!

III. THE CAUSE OF ITS DECLINE. If any river be thus actually reduced (as in Ezekiel's thought), it is because it is no longer fed as it once was by the rains of heaven. If a noble human life is thus reduced, it is because *it* is no longer supplied from above. It lacks the truth, the influences, the sustaining power, which should come to it from God. These may be cut off by some serious sin; or they may be withdrawn because we no longer keep open the channels through which they come. 1. Keep the mind open to all Divine wisdom and the heart to all holy influences. 2. Draw down the renewing rains of Heaven by constant communion and earnest prayer. 3. See that no "great transgression" diverts the waters; and the river of our life will flow on to the sea, without loss to its beauty or its power.—C.

Vers. 17—32.—*A vision of the unseen world.* In this highly figurative prophetic utterance we have—

I. THE PROPHET'S VISION ITSELF. He sees Egypt taking her place, as a fallen power,

amongst the departed in the nether world. Nothing could save her; there was no reason why she should not go down as other guilty powers had done. "Whom did she pass in beauty?" (ver. 19). No distinction could be made in her case; she must "go down and be laid with the uncircumcised" (ver. 19), "she and all her multitude" (ver. 20). "The strong amongst the mighty" (in Sheol) give the latest comer welcome (ver. 21). Assyria, with all her company, is there to greet her; there, too, is Persia (Elam), and there is Scythia (ver. 26), with "their swords under their heads, but their iniquities upon their bones" (ver. 27); Edom also is there, with her kings and princes, and "all the Zidonians, gone down with the slain." The old kingdoms that arose and that were sustained by violence have "perished with the sword" (Matt. xxvi. 52), and the prophet of Jehovah is commissioned to "cast down Pharaoh" (ver. 18) into "the nether parts of the earth" with them. 1. It is Egypt's sad *fate* to be discrowned of her power, as a mighty monarchy, to come down from her high place of honour and of command, to suffer an humiliating prostration from which she could have no hope of recovering. 2. It was Egypt's *comfort* that, in this descent, she would take her place amongst the greatest and strongest powers that once were upon the earth, but that had "gone down" to the shades. Pharaoh should see these, "and be comforted." She would not suffer alone.

II. ITS HISTORICAL PARALLEL. Those who have lived as God's servants, and have cared for the cause of righteousness, for the kingdom of God, have watched that they might witness the working of his hand among the great kingdoms of the earth. And they have seen that issue which Ezekiel here foretells concerning Egypt. They have seen great empires, rich and flourishing cities, powerful republics, that once "stood strong" and even claimed to be immortal, broken under the weight of their iniquities, burdened with their wealth and all the corruptions it engendered, struck by the holy hand of Divine retribution, "go down," and disappear. We look for them now, but they are no more. The same skies and the same hills and plains are there; the rivers that ran through the land still flow on; but what is left of their buildings, if anything is left at all, is in ruin; and the *power* that once was has utterly departed. It lives in nothing but in story and in song. But what is—

III. ITS PERSONAL APPLICATION. Not only the king or the prince, but also "the multitude," are seen in the nether parts (vers. 18, 24, 26). The people are there. This directs us to: 1. *A common impending fate.* Some day the grave will hold all the living. Indeed, to the poet's eye, this earth is less the home of the living than the resting-place of the dead.

> "The hills
> Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun, the vales
> Stretching in pensive quietness between;
> The venerable woods, rivers that move
> In majesty, and the complaining brooks
> That make the meadows green; and, poured round all,
> Old ocean's grey and melancholy waste,
> Are but the solemn decorations all
> Of the great tomb of man."
>
> (Bryant.)

As the multitude that once trod the earth now "slumber in its bosom," so we also shall soon find our place beneath the ground. 2. *A poetical consolation.* Small comfort would it be to Pharaoh (see ver. 31) to find that he and his were in no worse plight than other kings and peoples who tenanted the shades. But such as it was, it was at his service. And it is quite true, as the same writer (*supra*) reminds us—

> "Yet not to thine eternal resting-place
> Shalt thou retire alone. Thou shalt lie down
> With patriarchs of the infant world, with kings,
> The powerful of the earth, the wise, the good,
> Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
> All in one mighty sepulchre."

But we want some better consolation than this very imaginary and unsatisfying one. Surely this is a very poor alleviation for losing life and all that a true and full human life holds. We must look elsewhere for our comfort. And we shall not fail to find it.

3. *The real redeeming thought*, viz. that the future to which we look forward, as the disciples and followers of Christ, is neither the dark grave in the cemetery nor the little less inviting Sheol of Hebrew thought, but the home of the blessed in the near presence of God, where life is free and full and pure, the mansions of the Father's house.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Ver. 1.—If we may think of Ezekiel as compiling and arranging his own prophecies, we may think of him as returning, with something like a sense of relief, to his own special work as the watchman of the house of Israel. For upwards of two years the messages which it had been given him to write (how far they were in any sense published we have no means of knowing) in ch. xxv.—xxxii. had dealt exclusively with foreign nations. Now his own people are again the object of his care. He resumes his pastoral office at once for warning and consolation. From this point onwards, with the exception of the strange Meshech-Tubal episode in ch. xxxviii., xxxix., all is leading onwards to the final vision of the rebuilt temple, and the redistributed land of Israel, and through them to the times of the Messianic restoration. No date is given here for **the word of the Lord** which now came to him, but it may, perhaps be inferred, from vers. 21, 22, that it was immediately before the arrival of the messenger who brought the tidings that Jerusalem was taken. In the ecstatic state indicated by "the hand of the Lord" he knew that some great change was coming, that he had a new message to deliver, a new part to play.

Ver. 2.—**Speak to the children of thy people.** (On the force of the possessive pronoun, see note on ch. iii. 1.) The formula is carried on throughout the chapter (vers. 12, 17, 30). **Set him for their watchman.** Ezekiel falls back upon the thought of ch. iii. 17, but the image is expanded with characteristic fulness. The function of the watchman, in which he sees a parable of his own office, is to stand upon his tower (2 Sam. xviii. 24, 25; 2 Kings ix. 17; Hab. ii. 1), to keep his eye on the distant horizon, and as soon as the clouds of dust or the gleam of armour gives notice of the approach of the enemy, to sound the trumpet of alarm (Amos iii. 6; Hos. viii. 1; Jer. iv. 5; vi. 1), that men may not be taken unawares. If he discharge that duty faithfully, then, as in ch. iii. 17—21, the blood of those that perish through their own negligence shall rest on their own head.

Vers. 6—9.—**But if the watchman**, etc. The words imply what we might almost call the agony of self-accusation. The prophet asks himself whether he has acted on the warning which was borne in on his mind at the very beginning of his mission. Has he sounded the trumpet? Has he warned the people of the destruction that is coming on them? The outward imagery vanishes in ver. 7. It is of no Chaldean invader that the prophet had to give personal and direct warning, but of each man's own special sin which was bringing ruin on himself and on his country.

Ver. 10.—**Thus ye speak, saying**, etc. At the earlier stage the prophet had to contend with scorn, incredulity, derision (ch. xii. 22). They trusted in the promises of the false prophets (ch. xiii. 6). They laid to their soul the flattering unction that they were suffering, not for their own sins, but for the sins of their fathers (ch. xviii. 2). Now they stand face to face with the fulfilment of the prophet's words. They cherish no hopes, and they make no excuses. They have fallen into the abyss of despair. Admitting their own sin and the righteousness of their punishment, does not the very admission exclude hope? Who can bring life to those that are thus dead in trespasses and sins? The parallelism with Lev. xxvi. 39—42 is so striking that it can scarcely be accidental.

Ver. 11.—**Say unto them**, etc. To meet that despair the prophet has to fall back on the truth which he had proclaimed once before (ch. xviii. 32). He must appear as uttering a message of pardon resting on the unchanging character of the great Absolver. Now, as ever, it is true that he willeth not the death of the wicked, that all punishment (in this world, at least) is meant to lead to repentance, and that for those who repent there is the hope of restoration and of life. No righteousness in the past avails against the trangression of the present (ver. 12); but then also no wickedness of the past prevails to shut out the penitent's claim to pardon. As a man is at any given moment, when the judgment comes on him, so is he dealt with. In some sense, as in ver. 13, the righteousness of the past may become a stumbling-block. The man may trust in it, and be off his guard, ceasing to watch and pray, and so the temptation may prevail.

Ver. 15.—**If the wicked restore the pledge.** In ch. xviii. 7, 12, 16, this and its opposite

had been grouped with other forms of good and evil. Here it stands out in solitary pre-eminence. The reason may possibly be found in the fact that a time of exile and suffering was likely to make the sin, which the penitent thus showed that he had renounced, a specially common one. The starving man pledged his garment or his tools for the loan of money or of food at a price far below its value. There was a real self-sacrifice, a proof of the power of the faith that worketh by love, when the creditor restored it. The primary duty, when a man turned from evil, was, as far as in him lay, to overcome his besetting sin and make restitution for the past. Compare the words of the Baptist (Luke iii. 12—14), and those of Zacchæus (Luke xix. 8). **The statutes of life.** The words are used as in ch. xx. 11 and Lev. xviii. 5, on the assumption that, if a man kept the statutes, he should (in the highest sense of the word) live in them. It was reserved for the fuller illumination of St. Paul, taught by a representative experience to proclaim the higher truth that the Law, ordained for life, was yet the minister of condemnation and death unless there was something higher than itself to complete the work which it could only begin (Rom. vii. 10; viii. 3; comp. also Heb. vii. 19).

Ver. 17.—**The way of the Lord is not equal.** The prophet now proclaims what he had been taught, perhaps then, without proclaiming it, in ch. xviii. 25—30. Men are dealt with by the Divine Judge, not as their fathers have been before them, not even as they themselves have been in times past, but exactly as they are. Where could there be a more perfect rule of equity? The question how far Ezekiel thinks of the judgment itself as final, whether there is the possibility of repentance and pardon after it has fallen, and during its continuance, is not directly answered. He is speaking, we must remember, of a judgment on this side the grave, and therefore what we call the problems of eschatology were not before him. But the language of the document which lies at the basis of his theology (Lev. xxvi. 41) asserts that if men repented and "accepted" their earthly punishment, then Jehovah would remember his covenant, and would not destroy them utterly. And his own language as to Sodom and Samaria (ch. xvi. 53) indicates a leaning to the wider hope. If the problems of the unseen world had been brought before him, we may believe that he would have dealt with them as with those with which he actually came in contact, and that there also his words would have been, "O house of Israel, O sons of men, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?"

Ver. 21.—**In the twelfth year, etc.** The capture of Jerusalem took place in the fourth month of the eleventh year (Jer. xxxix. 2; lii. 6) from the captivity of Jehoiachin and the beginning of Zedekiah's reign. Are we to assume some error of transcription? or is it within the limits of probability that eighteen months would pass without any direct communication from Jerusalem of what had passed there? There is, I conceive, nothing improbable in what is stated. The exiles of Tel-Abib were not on the high-roads of commerce or of war. All previous communications were cut off by the presence of the Chaldean armies. In the words, **one that had escaped,** the prophet clearly referred to the intimation given him at the time of his wife's death (ch. xxiv. 26). When the fugitive entered he saw that the hour had at last come. One would give much to know who the fugitive was, but we can only conjecture. Had Baruch been sent by Jeremiah to bear the tidings to his brother prophet? Such a mission would have been a fulfilment of Jer. xlv. 5. A later tradition ascribes to Baruch a prominent part as a teacher among the exiles of Babylon (Bar. i. 2) shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Ver. 22.—**Now the hand of the Lord.** When the messenger arrived he found the prophet in a state of ecstasy. This was in the evening. In that prophetic ecstasy his mouth was opened, and the long silence broken, and though he had not heard the message with his outward ears, he had taken, as it were, that message as his text. It was not till his discourse was ended, and the morning came, that he himself heard the terrible tidings from the lips of the messenger. Then a change came over him. He was no more dumb. The long silence was broken. Had the silence lasted, we ask, from ch. iii. 26 onward? Had the whole intervening period been one of simply symbolic action, and of written but unspoken prophecies? The words at first suggest that conclusion; but it is traversed by the facts; by the commands of ch. xii. 10, 23; by the order to "prophesy" in ch. xiii. 2; by the message to speak unto the elders in ch. xiv. 4; by the question, "Doth he not speak parables?" of ch. xx. 49. I infer, therefore, that, though the silence had been dominant, it had not been unbroken. To some, at least, a message had been spoken. Others may have been allowed to read the written prophecies. The death of the prophet's wife tended, probably, to the continuance of the silence, and it seems a legitimate inference from ch. xxiv. 27 that it had continued from that date onward.

Ver. 24.—**They that inhabit those wastes of the land.** The utterance that follows was probably the direct result of what

Ezekiel heard from the messenger. He it was who reported the boastful claims of those who had been left in the land by the Chaldean armies—the "bad figs" of Jeremiah's parable, the least worthy representatives of the seed of Abraham, the assassins of Gedaliah (Jer. xli. 1, 2), who in these "waste places," the dens and caves in which they found a refuge (or, it may be, the phrase describes the condition of the whole country), led the lives of outlaws and bandits. The very words of their boast are reproduced: "Abraham, when he was yet but one, received the promise of inheritance. We are comparatively many, and are left as the true seed of Abraham (comp. Matt. iii. 9). The land is ours, and we will take possession of the estates of the exiles."

Ver. 25.—**Ye eat with the blood.** It is characteristic of Ezekiel that the first offence which he names with horror should be a sin against a positive commandment. He felt, as it were, a sense of loathing at what seemed to him a descent into the worst form of pollution, forbidden, not to the Jews only (Lev. xvii. 10; xix. 26; Deut. xii. 16), but to mankind (Gen. ix. 4); compare the scene in 1 Sam. xiv. 32. The same feeling shows itself in Zech. ix. 7 and Acts xv. 20, 29. The prohibition of blood took its place, in later Judaism, as among the precepts of Noah, which were binding even on the proselytes of the gate, upon whom, as distinct from the proselytes of righteousness, the rite of circumcision was not enforced; and as such were accepted by the council at Jerusalem, as binding also among Christian converts. Not for such as these was the inheritance of Israel, and the prophet asks indignantly, after naming yet more hateful offences, **Shall ye possess the land?**

Ver. 26.—**Ye stand upon your sword.** The words point to the open assertion of the law that might is right. Men relied on the sword, and on that only, for their support. Assassinations, as in Jer. xli., were, so to speak, as the order of the day. **Ye work abomination.** The noun, Ezekiel's ever-recurring word, indicates both the act of idolatry and the foul orgiastic rites that accompanied it. The verb, curiously enough, has the feminine suffix. Was it used intentionally, either as pointing to the prominence of women in those rites (Jer. xliv. 15), or to the degrading vices which involved the loss of true manhood (2 Kings xxiii. 7)? So some have thought; but I agree with Keil, Smend, and others, in seeing only an error of transcription. Once more, after heaping up his accusations, Ezekiel asks the question, "Shall ye possess the land?" "Are you the seed of Abraham?"

Ver. 27.—**They that are in the wastes.** The words paint, with a terrible vividness, what was passing in Ezekiel's fatherland. Did the fugitives of Judah seek the open country? they were exposed to the sword of the Chaldeans or of marauding outlaws. Did they seek safety in fortresses or caves? they were exposed, crowded together as they were under the worst possible conditions, to the ravages of pestilence.

Ver. 30.—**The children of thy people.** The words, like those of ch. xiv. 1 and xx. 1, 49, throw light on the prophet's relations to his people. Now that the long silence was broken, and the prophet spoke with greater freedom than he had ever done before, he acquired a fresh notoriety. The character of his last utterance, vindicating, as it might seem, the claim of the exiles to "possess the land," as against that of the remnant "in the wastes," may even have made him popular. The Authorized Version **against** is misleading; read, with the margin and the Revised Version, *about*. There was for the time no open hostility. They talked much, in places of private or public resort, of the prophet's new action. Each invited his neighbour to go and hear the prophet as he spake to them his message from Jehovah. And they came as **the people cometh**, in crowds, even as **my people**, the people of Jehovah, with reverent gestures and listening eagerly. Never before, we may well believe, had the prophet had so large or so promising a congregation. But he was taught to look below the surface and to read their thoughts, and there he read, as preachers of all ages have too often read after him, that they were hearers, and not doers (Matt. vii. 24—27; Jas. i. 23—25). In words they **showed much love** (the LXX. gives "falsehood"), spoke pleasant things, but the root-evil, the besetting sin, was still there. Their heart went after their covetousness (comp. Matt. xiii. 22; 2 Tim. iv. 10).

Ver. 32.—**A very lovely song**; literally, *a song of love*, an erotic idyll, the word being the same as in ver. 31. Yet this was the meaning of the large gathering. They came to hear the prophet, as they would to hear a hired singer at a banquet, like those of Amos vi. 5. The prophet's words passed over them and left no lasting impression. All that they sought was the momentary tickling of the sense. The words receive a special significance from Ps. cxxxvii. 3. The Jewish exiles were famous among their conquerors for the minstrel's art. The nobler singers refused to "sing the songs of Zion in a strange land;" others, it may be, were not so scrupulous. Had the prophet seen his people gather to listen to such a singer? Were they better occupied when they were listening to his message from Jehovah?

Ver. 33.—**When this cometh to pass.** The words can scarcely refer to the immediately preceding predictions in vers. 27, 28, which were primarily addressed to "the people in the waste places," the remnant left in Judah, and we have to go back to the wider, more general teaching of vers. 10—20. That was the prophet's message of judgment, his call to repentance. When the judgment should come, as it surely would, then they would know, in the bitterness of self-condemnation, that they had been listening, not to a hireling singer, but to a prophet of Jehovah.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—9.—*The watchman.* Ezekiel here returns to an idea which he has expressed earlier (ch. iii. 17). He stands as a watchman for his people. Every Christian preacher and teacher is in a similar position. The same may be said of every Christian man and woman who knows the peril of sin and has an opportunity of warning the ignorant and careless.

I. THE DUTIES OF THE WATCHMAN. 1. *To watch.* In order to serve his people he must first of all see for himself. We can only teach men what we have first learnt. The prophet must be a seer, the apostle a disciple, the missionary a Christian. To watch means (1) to be awake while others sleep; (2) to fix attention while others are listless; (3) to look abroad while others are satisfied with what they can see at home. The Christian watchman must be spiritually alert; he must not be satisfied with his own notions; he must sweep the horizon of truth; he must consider the distant and the future, but chiefly that which is approaching and of practical moment. He must look especially in two directions: (1) into the revealed truths of Christianity, to see indications of the principles of life and death; (2) into the actual world, to note its condition. Knowledge of men must go with knowledge of Scripture. The Christian teacher must not be a mere bookworm or cloistered student; he must know the world—men and affairs. 2. *To warn.* Having seen danger, the watchman must at once inform the city of the fact. He must wake the slumbering guard, blow the trumpet, or run to the belfry and sound the alarm. The Christian teacher is to warn as well as to comfort and exhort (1 Thess. v. 14).

II. THE LIMIT OF HIS RESPONSIBILITY. The watchman has but to watch and warn. When he has been quick to detect approaching danger, perhaps at first but as a faint cloud of dust on the horizon, and vigorous in blowing his trumpet to rouse the city, his part is done. He cannot meet the foe in the plain and prevent them from approaching the city. He cannot man the walls and guard the citadel. He can but blow his trumpet. Further, if the people will not heed or believe him, he cannot compel them to prepare for the conflict. If they still prefer their couches to their swords, the watchman cannot force them to arm. He is not the commander of the city. The greatest Christian teacher is but a watchman. No servant of Christ can compel men to turn from their carelessness and face the stern facts of life. If they will not hearken to faithful expostulation, the preacher can do no more for them. They are free, and they must choose for themselves. 1. *This is a warning to the careless.* They may refuse to attend. They can fall asleep again, vexed at the rousing trumpet-blast. But if they do this it is at their peril. (1) The danger is not the less because it is neglected. (2) The folly and sin of negligence aggravate the faults of those who give no heed to warning. Now they are without excuse. They can blame no one but themselves. 2. *This is a consolation for the faithful watchman.* If he is a true man, he must grieve over his negligent hearers. Still, his Master will recognize his fidelity.

III. THE GUILT OF HIS NEGLIGENCE. 1. *It is failure in a trust.* The citizens sleep in time of peril, and no one expects them to be on guard. But the watchman's special duty is to be awake and give warning. He who is entrusted with responsibility is expected to be true to his charge. 2. *It is sin against light.* The watchman sees the danger which the sleeping citizens do not perceive. His knowledge adds to his responsibility. His sin is but negative, he gives no false news, he does not play the traitor by opening the gates to the enemy. Yet he is unfaithful. 3. *It is negligence that hurts others.* It risks a whole city. We risk the welfare of all whom we might help to save, if we fail to warn them. Fear of disturbing their peace is no excuse. The

watchman must have courage to sound the alarm. There are times when the harp must be exchanged for the trumpet. The preacher must have courage to say unpleasant things.

Ver. 10.—*A question of despair.* I. THE CAUSE OF THE DESPAIR. The prophet has just been told that his responsibility is limited to his warning the people faithfully. If the watchman blows the trumpet lustily he can do no more. The blood of the careless people will then be on their own heads. But this truth, which gives consolation to the prophet, is alarming to the people. It is meant to be so. Yet the alarm may be taken in a wrong way. Instead of rousing themselves to meet and overcome the danger, the people may sink down paralyzed in the blankness of despair. The explanation of this despair is suggested by the language of the people. 1. *A consciousness of guilt.* The people perceive that their transgressions and their sins are upon them. The pilgrim feels the weight of his burden. The sudden awakening of an evil conscience plunges its possessor into midnight darkness. The new thing is not to know that wickedness was done; that knowledge was always possessed, though hitherto not much considered. It is to know that the sins still rest upon their doer, *i.e.* it is the feeling of present guilt for past deeds of wickedness. 2. *An experience of the consequences of sin.* "And we pine away in them." The death-penalty of sin does not come like a flash of lightning. Sin is a slow poison. It kills by a sort of spiritual consumption. With an awakening conscience the man perceives himself to be in a spiritual decline. No perception can be more provocative of despair.

II. THE QUESTION IT AROUSES. "How should we then live?" The despair is not yet absolute, or it would not suggest such a question as this. The most awful despair does not live in Doubting Castle. It is immured in a black dungeon of certain negation. Possibly the question suggested does not expect any answer. It sees no reply, and does not believe that any can be given. The decline is so steadfast, and the disease of sin that causes it so deep-rooted, that the despairing soul cannot look for deliverance, and the question is a sort of expostulation offered to the prophet when he would take a more hopeful view. Still it *is* a question, and therefore it leaves room for an answer. It is much that men should be brought to ask such a question. Too many do not perceive their danger, though they live in sin unrepented and unrestrained. The question implies certain thoughts. 1. *Sinners are in imminent peril of death.* To those who are truly awakened the prospect must be alarming. But the danger is not the less for those who do not yet perceive it. 2. *Men cannot save their own souls.* These endangered people must look elsewhere for safety. Unless salvation comes from above, it cannot be had. 3. *Men need light on the way of salvation.* It is not visible to the eye of sense; it cannot be discovered by thinking. The world needs a gospel. The heathen pine away, not knowing the Divine source of life. 4. *Christ answers the question of despair with a gospel of hope.* The answer is suggested in the next verse (ver. 11). It is completed in the gospel of Christ.

Ver. 11.—*God's desire for the world's salvation.* This is a Divine oath. God swears by his own life (see Heb. vi. 13). This shows how certain are the words spoken, how earnestly God desires men to accept them, and how difficult it is for men to believe them.

I. MEN HAVE FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT GOD HAS NO PLEASURE IN THE DEATH OF THE WICKED. Doctrines of reprobation were once popular. People thought that God destined the greater part of mankind to eternal misery before they were born, in order to magnify his own glory. The heathen have had ideas of gods who delighted in blood. Christians have thought that there is a certain Divine satisfaction in taking vengeance on the sinner. Consider the causes of these views. 1. *Divine warnings.* God warns sternly. Hence he is thought to will harshly. It is supposed that he desires to do what he threatens. 2. *The analogy of human passions.* With man "revenge is sweet." Therefore it is thought to be so with God. Men act too much in order to please themselves. Therefore they imagine that God does the same. 3. *The experience of Divine judgments.* They are at times so sweeping and wholesale, and escape from them seems to be so hopeless, that their victims are tempted to regard them as the outcome of God's own desires.

II. IT IS A FACT THAT GOD HAS NO PLEASURE IN THE DEATH OF THE WICKED. 1. *This is positively affirmed.* Here it is stated on oath. No truth of revelation is more clear or positive than this. 2. *It is true to the character of God.* God is love, and love can have no pleasure in suffering and death. God is our Father, and a true father can have no pleasure in the death of his children. 3. *It is confirmed by the action of God,* who has sent his Son to save the world. While death is the wages of sin, the gift of God is the opposite—eternal life. The New Testament is a grand contradiction to theological pessimism.

III. THE DEATH OF THE WICKED IS DUE TO THEIR OWN WILLS. "Why will ye die?" He wills to die who wills the means of death. The man who takes poison takes his life. When the process is revealed this is done openly. When it is not seen it is still done. The sinner then wills his own death, though unwittingly, by deliberately choosing the course that will certainly issue in it. Now, this is a matter of a man's own volition. So absolute is the territory of will that the wicked may yet die in their sins, although God not only does not desire their death, but earnestly desires their salvation. The awful freedom of man's will—this is the rock on which universalism breaks.

IV. GOD ENTREATS MEN TO TURN AND LIVE. 1. *It is possible for all to live.* As the sinner chooses his own death, so the means of life-deliverance are within his reach. He cannot save himself, but he may choose whether he will be saved. 2. *The condition of life is conversion.* "Turn ye from your evil ways." This is true repentance. It means more than regretful tears. It takes place in the will, not merely in the emotions. A tearless change is true conversion, while weeping without change is worthless sentiment. Yet this does not require perfect conquest of evil and a full recovery from it before God will have mercy. We are to turn round. The progress up the hill to light and life has yet to be made. Repentance sets our faces in the right direction. 3. *God urges and entreats sinners to turn and live.* This shows (1) their great danger; (2) God's wonderful compassion and love; and yet (3) the difficulty of inducing men to repent. Thus God still pleads in infinite pity with his lost children. Happy are they who hear his gracious call and respond to it!

Vers. 12—16.—*Past and present.* I. THE PRESENT WILL NOT BE JUDGED BY THE PAST. This is one principle underlying the various very clear statements of the passage. It is a principle that is needed in order to balance the influence of other principles that appear to work in an opposite direction. Indeed, at first sight it seems to be contradictory to some well-known laws. Is it not repeatedly asserted that a man will be judged by his past life? The sins of the past may be forgotten, but they stand recorded in the book of judgment and the guilt of them remains on the sinner. How, then, is it possible for the present and future to be free from the past? 1. *The past lives by its effects in the present.* If, however, by effort of will, aided by Divine grace, we neutralize the bad past, then that past is slain. 2. *Forgiveness removes the guilt of the past.* 3. *Past innocence has no power in it to prevent present sin.* It is a help in that direction, for it works through the force of habit. But habit may be resisted and broken.

II. PAST RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL NOT EXCUSE PRESENT SIN. We are judged chiefly, at all events, by what we are, rather than by what we were. Moreover, there is no possibility of our having acquired an extra stock of merit in the past which we can set off against our present failings. We never have a balance on the credit side of our account with Heaven. At our best we are but "unprofitable servants" (Luke xvii. 10). An employer cares little for old testimonials. He must see a certificate of character up to date. If a man has borne an excellent reputation for years, and at last breaks down and disgraces himself, he is said to have "lost his character." His good name in the past now counts for nothing. It is utterly gone. Now, the practical warning that issues from these considerations is that we must take good heed to our present life. It is of no use to hark back to the day of conversion for assurance. We may long have left the good beginnings of that day. There is no security in past service, position in the Church, etc. We need to be on our guard against falling, even to the last. It is possible to turn aside at the eleventh hour. The ship may be wrecked in sight of the haven; then her passengers will not be saved by their memory of their long prosperous voyage.

III. PAST SIN WILL NOT PREVENT PRESENT SALVATION. Happily, the principle works both ways. If we must first take it as a warning against trusting in a good past, we may also consider it as a reason for not despairing on account of a bad past. 1. *The bad past may be forsaken.* The grace of Christ will help us to break loose from the tyranny of habit. 2. *The bad past may be forgiven.* The Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world removes the stains of guilt from penitent souls. Then God will no more accuse them of the past. Pardon covers the past with oblivion. 3. *The new present is what God observes.* "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. v. 17). Then God only looks at the new life and judges of that. Therefore we supremely need grace for the present moment. We live in the present. Religion is for the present.

Ver. 17.—*Charging God with injustice.* I. IT IS NATURAL FOR MEN TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE JUSTICE OF GOD'S ACTIONS. The moral character of Providence is of immense importance. If God acted from caprice, there would be no ground on which we could rely in approaching him, and our whole lives would lie at the mercy of chance. If he were unjust, the most fearful confusion would result. Our security lies in the justice of God, in our knowledge that he will only do what is fair and equable and right. Though we depend on the mercy of God, we cannot refrain from appealing repeatedly to his justice. We are much concerned to know that he is perfectly just.

II. THERE ARE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH GOD APPEARS TO BE UNJUST. It certainly cannot be said that nature and providence are clear revelations of Divine justice, so legibly written that he who runs may read. The world abounds with inequalities. There are the greatest differences in the lots of innocent children. Good men fall into adversity; bad men prosper. The special ground of difficulty with the readers of Ezekiel was that men of time-honoured character were punished, while notorious sinners were pardoned. This was apparently a matter of much distress and doubt, leading to accusations against God for not acting equally, *i.e.* fairly.

III. IT IS FOOLISH TO FORM HASTY OPINIONS CONCERNING GOD'S JUSTICE. 1. *We do not know all the facts.* We see a certain superficial condition; what lies deeper is hidden. Possibly Ezekiel's contemporaries did not know of the fall of the men of good repute, or of the amendment of their notoriously wicked acquaintances. 2. *We do not know all the principles on which God acts.* They may be ultimately based on justice, and yet they may be complicated with various considerations. God is not only rewarding and punishing. 3. *We do not know the true character of events.* What we name evil may really be good. At all events, there may be mercies in disguise.

IV. MEN ARE SLOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD'S PERCEPTION OF CHARACTER. Most people are reluctant to admit that characters are susceptible of change. They label their acquaintances with certain moral titles, and they refuse to allow that those titles are altered. At all events, this is especially true in regard to changes for the worse in themselves and in regard to alterations for the better in others. A man takes it for granted that he will always be estimated according to his old good character. On the other hand, the world is slow to believe in repentance and amendment. It regards the pardon of the sinner as unreasonable, because it will not see that when he repents he is no longer a sinner.

V. IT IS COMMON TO LAY THE CHARGE OF MAN'S INJUSTICE TO GOD'S ACCOUNT. "But as for them, their way is not equal." Straight lines look crooked when regarded through a crooked glass. To the unjust man justice seems to be unjust. Sin gives an evil colour to holiness. The righteousness of God is obscured by man's unrighteousness.

VI. IT WOULD BE WELL FOR MEN TO CONSIDER THEIR OWN WAYS INSTEAD OF JUDGING GOD'S WAYS. The trouble that is wasted in difficult theological speculations had better be spent in searching self-examination. While we are looking for a mote in God's eye, we fail to see the beam in our own eye—the beam that caused us to fancy there was any mote in God's eye at all! Theology is too often an excuse for the neglect of religion, but difficulties in providence do not destroy the guilt of sin.

Ver. 24.—*The right of the many.* The idea seems to be—though Abraham was but one man, yet he was promised Canaan; much more, then, must his descendants have a right to the land, since they now form a numerous nation. This plea is urged against

the threat that the Jews shall be expelled from their land. It is not difficult to discover its hollowness. But it is propped up by common fallacies against which we need to be on our guard.

I. THE PLEA. It stands on two grounds. 1. *That children have a right to their father's property.* This is recognized in law and equity. If a man dies intestate, his family inherits his goods as a matter of course. The same is looked for in regard to the special privileges of Divine grace. 2. *That numbers multiply rights.* If Abraham had a right to the land, much more must a whole nation of his descendants hold that right. This democratic age glories in the rights of numbers. No doubt the people have rights as against privileged monopolists. Thus it may well be urged in an overpopulous country, that the people have certain rights in the land, that there must be some limit at least to landlord monopoly. The same democratic feeling passes over to religion. Christ preached to the people, and "the common people heard him gladly" (Mark xii. 37). Hence the idea that privilege in religion is transferred from the monopolist to the multitude, from priest to people, from Israel to the world.

II. THE FALLACY. 1. *The descendants of Abraham may not be his true children.* It was a mistake to make much of descent from the great ancestor. That only condemned the more heavily the sins of his unworthy descendants. John the Baptist rebuked this mistake when he told the proud Jews that God was able to raise up children to Abraham from the very stones of the wilderness (Matt. iii. 9). St. Paul pointed out that not all who were of the stock of Israel could be accounted the true Israel of God (Rom. ix. 6). They are Abraham's children who inherit Abraham's faith. 2. *Where no right exists, the number of claimants will not create it.* The right to Canaan was only conferred by God's grace, and only held on condition of faithfulness. It could be and it was withdrawn when that condition was broken. The number who claimed the right could not affect the question as to the desert of the people to retain it. No one merits the kingdom of heaven. If millions claim the privileges of the kingdom, the millions have no right to it. The number of sinners creates no right to have the pardon of sin. If the whole world deserves destruction, the whole world may be destroyed. Its numbers will not save it. If we appeal to God's grace, that applies to a single individual. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice. He has infinite love for the most obscure of his subjects. Therefore the multiplication of the number of the guilty will not arouse his pity in a new and special manner. 3. *Each individual must seek individual grace.* We cannot be made citizens of the kingdom of heaven *en masse*. We must go single file through the strait gate. 4. *There is room in the grace of God for the greatest number.* The multitude of applicants can never be too great for infinite bounty. The many can claim no rights. But the gospel is for them, not for the few. Christ came to give his life a ransom "for many" (Matt. xx. 28).

Vers. 30—33.—*Popular preaching.* Ezekiel illustrates the characteristics of popular preaching in his own person and example. He is also brought to see how vain and delusive the attractiveness of it may be.

I. THE SECRET OF POPULAR PREACHING. 1. *A good voice.* Ezekiel's preaching was "as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice." The first physical condition of preaching is to be able to make one's self heard. The story of Demosthenes declaiming with pebbles in his mouth by the seashore shows how the Greeks valued good articulation in oratory. 2. *A graceful manner.* Ezekiel was compared to a skilled player of music. The human voice is a delicate instrument. The manner in which it is used considerably affects the attractiveness of the speaker. An audience likes to hear pleasant speaking. 3. *Rhythmic utterance.* The special charm of Ezekiel's speech was compared to song and music. There is a rhythm of thought as well as of words. People do not enjoy rude shocks to their prejudices. 4. *Imaginativeness.* We have the substance of Ezekiel's preaching, and even in the reduced form of an abstract and a translation it teems with imagery. People enjoy good illustrations. The concrete is more interesting than the abstract. 5. *Fervour.* The popular description of Ezekiel's preaching would do injustice to the prophet if we were not able to supplement it with his recorded utterances. Ezekiel was not an empty, mellifluous rhetorician. He put his heart into his words. Though less pathetic than Hosea and Jeremiah, and though falling short of the rapture of Isaiah, he was a preacher of power and earnestness. Pleasant

words cloy if forcible words do not accompany them. Demosthenes the orator of force was greater than Cicero the orator of grace. 6. *Truth.* Ezekiel spoke true words—words that were true to fact and life, true to the heart of man, and true to the thought of God. There is a spell in truth. To speak truth feebly may arrest attention when to clothe error with all the charms of rhetoric fails. 7. *Inspiration.* Ezekiel was a prophet. He spoke under Divine influence. This was the greatest cause of his power. The preacher needs to be a prophet. He must drink of the Divine well if he would give forth words of power.

II. THE FAILURE OF POPULAR PREACHING. 1. *Popularity is no proof of success.* In his early preaching Ezekiel was neglected (ch. iii. 7). But there came a turn in the tide, and then his name was in everybody's mouth, and people thronged to hear him. Yet this was not success. There is no proof that a good work is being accomplished, in the fact that crowds hang upon the utterances of a famous speaker. It may be that he is prostituting his gifts, and catering only for applause, to the neglect of truth and right, like Jeremiah's pleasant-speaking rivals (Jer. xxiii. 16, 17). But even if he speaks like Ezekiel, like Ezekiel he may be to the people but a pleasant voice. 2. *To be interested in preaching is no proof of truly benefiting by it.* (1) There may be a social interest, in following the crowds who run after a fashionable orator. (2) There may be an emotional interest, when the pulpit is taken as the Sunday substitute for the stage, and people relieve the *ennui* of commonplace existence by indulging in the emotions stirred by eloquence. (3) There may be an intellectual interest, when theological questions are in vogue, as in Puritan times, when men discussed predestination at the ale-house. Milton represents Satan and his crew debating deep theological problems in hell. Their interest in theology did not save them. We may be interested in the substance of preaching, and anxious to learn truth, and yet still fail to receive the designed good of the message. 3. *Preaching fails if it does not lead to practice.* Ezekiel's hearers flatter him with lip-thanks, and make verbal acknowledgments of what he says; but they go no further. (1) The heart is not touched. "Their heart goeth after their covetousness." (2) The conduct is not affected. "They hear thy words, but they do them not." Ezekiel agrees with St. James, that hearing without doing is vain (Jas. i. 22). So Christ teaches in his parable of the house on the sand and the house on the rock (Matt. vii. 24—27).

Ver. 33.—*The recognition of a prophet.* I. A PROPHET IS NOT ALWAYS RECOGNIZED. Ezekiel was among his people as a prophet, yet they did not admit his claim. This is the more remarkable because they recognized the charm of his preaching, which had become exceedingly popular. His higher ministry was still ignored. While the common people heard Christ gladly, and confessed that "never man spake like this Man," his greatest message was ignored, and his chief claim set aside by the multitude. God sometimes sends a prophet to these later times. His gifts and powers are recognized, but the world is slow to perceive that he brings a message from God. 1. *The deeper truth does not show itself in outward effects on the senses.* 2. *Men are too often out of all sympathy with spiritual truth.* 3. *A prophet's words may refer to the future.*

II. A PROPHET WILL BE RECOGNIZED WHEN THE TRUTH OF HIS WORDS IS CONFIRMED BY EVENTS. 1. A prophet's words *are true.* The mere utterance of lofty thoughts is of little value if those thoughts are not true. The authority of a prophet resides in the truth of his message. 2. A true prophet's words *concern facts of life.* They have not only to deal with unseen verities; they also concern the application of those verities to everyday experience. There they may be seen and tested. Religion bears upon life. Its truth is illustrated by its working in the world. If our faith will "work," we have a good reason for believing that it is grounded in truth. 3. A prophet's words *will be tested by events.* The false prophet will be surely exposed. If people had not very short memories they would observe how a succession of modern prophets have fixed near dates for the accomplishment of predictions in Daniel and the Revelation; the wave of time has wiped out these fatal dates, and yet the world exists! On first thought we should think it a privilege to have been contemporaries with the prophets—to have heard Isaiah preach, and Ezekiel, and Hosea; to have listened to Peter and John and Paul; above all, to have been in the throng that gathered on the shores of the Sea of Galilee when Jesus was on earth. Yet our present

privileges are really greater than any could have been under those circumstances, because we have the grand confirmation of history.

III. A PROPHET SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED BY HIS HEARERS. 1. *Not to recognize him reveals spiritual callousness.* The true prophet is not only discerned by visible signs. We are required to "try the spirits" (1 John iv. 1). Thus it is possible to know whether a man comes to us from God. At all events, we may judge by the present moral and spiritual results of teaching. Without waiting for historical events, "by their fruits ye shall know them" in their influence on present-day life. It is to the disgrace of the Church that some of her best teachers have been tabooed as heretics or neglected with chilling indifference. 2. *Not to recognize him means to miss a golden opportunity.* For a prophet to have been among us, and yet not to have been recognized, means a sad loss. He may have been popular as a preacher, yet we have grieved his heart if we have not acknowledged his Divine mission. When it is too late this is seen. No sooner is the persecuted or neglected prophet departed than a chorus of praises springs up around his grave. It would have been better to have hearkened to his living words. Men build the tombs of dead prophets, and stone their living successors.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 7.—*The commission of the watchman.* In the position occupied by Ezekiel there was much that was special and peculiar; his commission and his duty accordingly differed in many respects from those of other prophets, and in a degree still more marked from those of ordinary ministers of religion. Still, the points in which his ministry accorded with that of other heralds of Divine righteousness and mercy were both more numerous and more important than those which were special to himself. The consideration of Ezekiel's calling must therefore not only help us to realize what was his work, but help us to apprehend and feel how solemn and sacred is the responsibility attaching to the office of every true religious teacher and preacher.

I. HIS DIVINE APPOINTMENT. Upon this the mind of the prophet was clear. He had heard his God, the God of his fathers, addressing his inmost nature: "I have set thee a watchman." He did not assume the office and the work at the instigation of his own heart. It was not through vanity or ambition that he took upon him to speak authoritatively to his countrymen. He was not invited or summoned by the house of Israel to be their counsellor. The voice that called him was Divine; it was a voice which he had no moral option but to obey.

II. HIS SPECIAL CHARGE. Ezekiel did indeed receive messages for others than his countrymen; he communicated the mind and will of God to Edom and to Moab, to Tyre and to Egypt. But it was the house of Israel to whom he was sent, who were placed, in a measure, under his care. They were his own people and kindred, sharing his inherited advantages and privileges. And he seems to have felt towards them very much, as centuries afterwards, Paul felt towards his kindred according to the flesh. He had a burning zeal and solicitude for their welfare. He counted it an honourable and sacred, although a very painful, office to watch for their souls.

III. HIS PERSONAL QUALIFICATIONS. It is not fanciful to lay great stress upon the appellation by which he is constantly addressed by the Lord himself: "Son of man." In order to mediate between God and man, a prophet needs not only a nature reverent and receptive towards God, but a nature sympathetic towards man. A true man, understanding human strength and weakness, entering into the trials and temptations of human life, appreciating human motives, hopes, fears, and aims, the minister of religion is qualified to deal with the souls of his fellow-creatures. No one can read the book of his prophecies without feeling that Ezekiel was just such a man.

IV. HIS RECEPTIVE ATTITUDE. Ezekiel's first business was to place himself in communication with the Being in whom is all truth, in whom is all authority. "Hear the word at my mouth!" was God's command. A mind confident in its own wisdom, self-sufficient and arrogant, could not fulfil the prophetic office aright. The prophet speaks for God; but he must first be with God. He must see the vision he is to relate, and hear the message he is to repeat. There is ever danger lest religious teachers should teach upon their own account; but reverence and modesty should lead

them to regard themselves as vehicles of truth and warning, promise and encouragement, to their fellow-men.

V. HIS ACTIVE DUTY. "Warn them from me!" was the Divine command; which implies that the house of Israel was in danger, and needed stirring and authoritative admonition. And this was indeed the case, as is apparent from the facts of their history. It is an unthankful office to discharge, and Ezekiel met, as every faithful teacher must do, with hostility and unbelief, with resentment and ingratitude. But the duty was plain, and the prophet fulfilled it, whether men gave heed or forbore. And his ministry was not wholly in vain.—T.

Vers. 8, 9.—*The responsibility of the watchman.* It was well that the prophet should be given clearly to understand what was expected and required of him, not by men to whom he was sent, but by God who sent him. Plainer language could not have been used than this, in which Ezekiel is not only told the nature of his message to the house of Israel, but is informed of the responsibility attaching to the manner in which the commission was fulfilled.

I. THE DUTY. The special duty of the watchman or guardian, as here explained, concerns the treatment of the wicked. More particularly it is for him (1) to warn the wicked; (2) to assure the inattentive and impenitent that the punishment of death awaits him; (3) to admonish him to repent.

II. THE POSSIBILITY OF FAILURE. Enthusiasm sometimes loses sight of this. Many a young minister of religion commences his work with the conviction that God's message has only to be delivered in order to its acceptance; that the moral Law is so beautiful that it has but to be exhibited in order to be revered and honoured; that the gospel is so precious and glorious that no one who hears it can fail to embrace it. Experience dispels many of our illusions; and it is soon found that there are men capable of listening to the threats of the Law and to the promises of the gospel with utter indifference and unconcern. Ezekiel was reminded that some of the wicked might not turn, might die in their iniquity. Doubtless he found that this was actually the case. It is no discredit either to the message or to the messenger that men do not accept the Word and act upon it. Our Lord Jesus had occasion to marvel at the unbelief of those to whom he ministered; and when St. Paul preached, "some believed, and some believed not."

III. THE UNFAITHFUL WATCHMAN. This is the appointed guardian who "does not speak to warn the wicked of his way." This unfaithfulness may be accounted for by indolence, or by undue fear, or by a desire to conciliate and please his hearers. But all such motives should be consumed by a burning desire on the part of the spiritual guardian to commend himself to his Master. The watchman is assured that if, through his unfaithfulness, the wicked dies unwarned and impenitent in his iniquity, the blood of the perishing shall be required at the watchman's hand.

IV. THE FAITHFUL WATCHMAN. Faithfulness does not involve uniform or even usual success. The earnestly and frequently warned may nevertheless die in his iniquity. The fervent prophet, the zealous preacher, the diligent pastor, may have the inexpressible sorrow of seeing little fruit of their labour. It may be necessary that the testimony should be borne, even though rejected and despised. But the servant of the Lord is assured, for his encouragement, that, if he does his duty, he delivers his soul. His workmanship may perish in the flames; yet he himself may be saved, though through the fire.—T.

Vers. 12, 13.—*The vanity of transitory goodness.* The ministers of religion are often pained and sometimes discouraged by instances, such as are here referred to, of that goodness which is "as the morning cloud and the early dew, which soon goeth away."

I. THERE IS A GOODNESS WHICH IS SPECIOUS, BUT SUPERFICIAL. Like the seed growing upon rocky soil, it springs up rapidly, and its show is fair; but the reality has no correspondence to the appearance. Impressible, easily influenced, and fickle natures are the soil upon which this growth is observed.

II. IN TIME OF TRIAL THE BASELESSNESS OF THIS GOODNESS IS MADE APPARENT. The man trusts to his own righteousness, commits iniquity, and transgresses the Divine Law. Temptation assails, persecution terrifies, ridicule overcomes, evil example per-

suades; and then the weak character yields, unable to endure the probation. Such cases are frequent in the experience of all who work for God and have to deal with a variety of human character and disposition.

III. GOODNESS WHICH DOES NOT ENDURE PROBATION IS NOT REMEMBERED, AND AVAILS NOTHING IN GOD'S SIGHT. The character of a man is regarded as a whole, and is not judged by any partial aspects or manifestations. Because a man has had good feelings or has performed good acts, it does not follow that he is a good man. It is life, and not any one day of life, which is the true period of probation. A virtue that cannot endure temptation is no true virtue. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."

APPLICATION. The minister of religion must not be misled by the mere appearance of piety. He must wait and look for the proof of that deep-seated principle, which alone can govern the conduct and transfigure the life. At the same time, he must make use of every means to fortify men against inevitable temptation, and especially must he admonish the young and inexperienced to watch and to pray, and to take unto them the whole armour of God.—T.

Vers. 14, 15.—*The efficacy of repentance.* If, on the one hand, the prophet was warned that some seemingly righteous, superficially good, would fall, he was encouraged, on the other hand, by the assurance that some wicked persons would, as the result of his admonitions, repent and convert, and would be brought to true and Divine life.

I. THE SEAT OF REPENTANCE. This must be the spiritual nature. The promptings to a better life come from within, from better feelings and better convictions and purposes. Repentance is a change of mind, of heart.

II. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF REPENTANCE. These will vary with the previous life, with the special circumstances, the opportunities and position of the convert. In ver. 15 these practical proofs of repentance are mentioned, and these acts may be taken as examples of the modes in which true repentance will undoubtedly display itself.

III. THE REWARD OF REPENTANCE. 1. The evil deeds of the former life shall not be remembered or imputed. 2. The sentence of death shall be cancelled. 3. The penitent and reformed shall live, *i.e.* in the life of God himself.—T.

Ver. 20.—*Divine equity.* Ezekiel was well aware that his message would not meet with universal acceptance. But he was also aware that it would meet, not only with indifference and unbelief, but also with hostility and rejection. The very principles of the Divine government would be questioned. Forewarned is forearmed. And the prophet was himself convinced of the Divine justice. For were he not so convinced, the heart would have been taken out of his work, and his personal and ministerial life would have been blighted and weakened.

I. THE DIVINE EQUITY CHALLENGED. There were those who, when they listened to the intentions of the Supreme Ruler, as declared by his minister, criticized the principles of God's administration, affirming, "The way of the Lord is not equal." 1. There is a presumption against this criticism, arising from human ignorance and the limitation of human faculties. 2. And there is a presumption against it, arising from all that we certainly know of the character of the supreme Eternal Judge. 3. Another objection in many cases arises from the character of those who censure the ways of God: they have much to fear from judgment by a righteous and impartial tribunal.

II. THE DIVINE EQUITY VINDICATED. It is very remarkable that the method of vindication is not by a laboured argument, but by a direct statement of fact and a direct appeal to men's reason and conscience. "O house of Israel, I will judge every one of you after his ways." That is to say: 1. God's judgment and the consequent retribution are facts which no objection or scepticism can destroy. 2. The principles of God's judicial action are such as it is hard for any reasonable man to blame or dispute. Every man is to be judged individually, and every man is to be judged upon his own conduct and his own character. These considerations have only to be amplified and to be pondered, and they afford a convincing and satisfactory reply to the objections of the captious and critical.—T.

Ver. 21.—*Evil tidings.* Ezekiel had repeatedly and most plainly foretold the capture

of Jerusalem. He waited in sad suspense for the fulfilment of his inspired prediction. At last it came; and one who had escaped from Jerusalem, and who had fled eastward, brought the tidings to the children of the Captivity.

I. THESE TIDINGS AFFECTED EZEKIEL AS A MAN, AROUSING HIS SYMPATHY.

II. THESE TIDINGS AFFECTED HIM AS A PATRIOT, AFFLICTING HIM WITH HUMILIATION. Jerusalem was the metropolis of his country, of his race,—it was the scene of events famous in national story. It had been won by the prowess of David; it had been adorned by the opulence and splendour of Solomon; it had been the emporium of commerce, and the home of the learned and the great. It had been the chosen seat of the sanctuary of Jehovah. How could a true-hearted Hebrew like Ezekiel hear of the capture and fall of the city of David, without feeling his heart sore and anguished because of his country's bitter humiliation?

III. THESE TIDINGS AFFECTED HIM, AS A DEVOUT ISRAELITE, WITH SINCERE DISTRESS. Ezekiel looked upon this event as a chastisement from God inflicted because of the unfaithfulness of the people, and their neglect to use their privileges and opportunities as they should have done. When the blow fell, his fears were realized and his sorrow was stirred within him, because of this consequence of Judah's sins, and because of the evidence afforded of the displeasure of the righteous God.

IV. THESE TIDINGS AFFECTED HIM AS A PROPHET WHO RECOGNIZED HEREIN THE FULFILMENT OF THE INSPIRED PREDICTION. What befell Jerusalem was what Ezekiel had, in the name of the Lord, repeatedly and plainly foretold. He could not but be confirmed in the veracity of his God and in the authenticity of his own commission, when the word which he had spoken was fulfilled, and when the disaster of which he had faithfully warned his fellow-countrymen fell upon them in all its destructiveness and desolation.—T.

Vers. 23—29.—*The powerlessness of privilege to save.* At length the prophet's lips are opened; and he who for so long has been dumb, so far as ministration to his own people was concerned, is set free to testify to the sons of Abraham. While silenced as regards Israel, Ezekiel has prophesied concerning the heathen nations. Now he again addresses his countrymen, and it is interesting to observe to what purpose he uses his recovered liberty of speech. Always candid, fearless, and faithful, the prophet assures his countrymen that a position of privilege, regarded by itself, is no guarantee of salvation and blessing, that privileges neglected and abused only entail the severer condemnation.

I. ISRAEL'S PRIVILEGES. These were many, but Ezekiel makes especial reference to two. 1. The descent of the nation from Abraham, the father of the faithful and the friend of God. 2. The promise of inheriting the land. This Jehovah had given to the progenitors of the nation, and he had fulfilled his gracious assurance. No people were so highly favoured; they possessed the memory of their glorious ancestors; the laws and promises given by Moses, their great leader, deliverer, and legislator; the institutions of priesthood, sacrifice, and worship, by which God revealed himself to his people and secured to them his mercy and favour; and all the associations and advantages connected with the occupation of the land of promise.

II. ISRAEL'S UNFAITHFULNESS. The people had Abraham to their father, but they did not the works of Abraham, and they had not Abraham's faith. The people did possess the land, but they did not use their national privileges as they might have done, they did not make the land a land of righteousness and true piety. The prophet, in this passage, refers to faults and sins of two orders, with which the people are especially upbraided. (1) Idolatrous apostacy; and (2) moral delinquency,—both of which are charged upon the people with that outspoken plainness by which Ezekiel's writings are so strikingly and honourably marked.

III. ISRAEL'S PUNISHMENT. There is a certain monotony about these threats and denunciations. Because of the abominations which these highly favoured people have committed, it is foretold: 1. That multitudes shall be slain by the sword of the enemy, by the wild beasts that shall multiply because of the desolation of the land, and by the pestilence. 2. That the country, in consequence of the calamities befalling its inhabitants, shall be wasted. The pride and pomp of her power shall cease, and her mountains shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.

IV. ISRAEL'S WITNESS TO GOD. This is an unintentional and unconscious witness, but none the less a valuable and effective testimony for all who receive it. Those who see and hear of the fulfilment of the Divine warnings and predictions cannot but have their faith confirmed in the truth and power of the Most High, and in the righteousness of his dealings with the sons of men. He is shown to be a Judge, from whose observation and cognizance no misdemeanour can be screened, and from whose righteous sentence no criminal can escape.—T.

Vers. 30—33.—*The prophet's reception.* Oftentimes have faithful ministers of religion to share the experience and the distress of Ezekiel, who was listened to with a measure of curiosity, interest, and satisfaction, but whose counsels were unheeded and whose requirements were unfulfilled. The Lord, who commissioned his servant the prophet, assured him that, notwithstanding his authoritative commission, he should meet, from many who heard his voice, with incredulity and practical rejection. Some, who were gratified with his discourse, his poetical illustrations, his sublime flights of imagination, his grand and rhetorical invective, should nevertheless refuse or neglect to put his precepts and admonitions into practice. There is something very picturesque in the account here given of the prophet's reception. Some of its points are these—

I. GENERAL INTEREST. The people talk *of* him, even if they talk *against* him; they say one to another, "Come, let us hear the word." Ezekiel had not, therefore, to complain of neglect.

II. OUTWARD AND VERBAL RESPECT. His prophetic vocation is acknowledged. The people come to him and sit before him and listen to his discourse. There is every outward demonstration of honour.

III. ENJOYMENT OF HIS LANGUAGE. "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." The melody of the prophet's speech, the grace of his diction, the grandeur of his style, excite and please the imagination of all who are capable of literary appreciation.

IV. PROFESSIONS OF LOVE. There is something beyond mere admiration. "With their mouth they show much love." A witness within assures the people that the prophet is a man who feels for them and desires their welfare. Love awakens love, and in a superficial way they feel a certain attachment to the prophet personally; they know him to be their true friend.

V. CONSCIOUSNESS OF INCONSISTENCY BETWEEN THE PROPHETIC DOCTRINE AND THEIR OWN LIFE. This arises from their disobedience to the prophetic counsel and requirements. They hear the words of the Lord, but they will not do them; their heart goeth forth into covetousness. A schism is thus created between their innermost convictions—the voice of reason and of conscience on the one hand, and their habitual practice on the other. The Word fails to produce a moral reformation. In such cases the prophet prophesies in vain.

VI. MATTER IS THUS LAID UP FOR FUTURE REPENTANCE. When we see what is best and do it not, we may be assured that our choice is one which we shall surely come to regret. The Hebrews of Ezekiel's time knew that he was a just and faithful man, to whom they listened with interest and pleasure. They were assured that the time should come when they should know that there had been a prophet among them, and that in neglecting his ministrations they had forfeited blessings then placed within their reach, and had wronged their own souls. Privileges neglected and abused can never be recalled, but their memory will be bitter when they rise up in judgment against the unfaithful.—T.

Vers. 1—9.—*The watchman's office.* All the resources of God's ingenuity are employed to find argument and appeal for man's slumbering conscience. The incidents of ordinary life are carved into channels for the conveyance of Divine messages. No man shall say that the message was above his comprehension. For even a child can understand if it is willing. Lessons concerning the heavenly life meet the eye of the observer all the day long. As prudent men act to conserve their bodily life, so God acts in our spiritual concernments.

I. A HOSTILE INVASION SUPPOSED. In the earlier days of human history raids from neighbouring tribes were frequent. International rights and usages were things

unknown. Such an act as a public declaration of war was never considered a public duty. The more secretly and suddenly a hostile army could make its attack, the more to its credit. Hence a border population was kept in continual suspense. It had to bear the brunt of a thousand alarms and a thousand perils. Such invasions were often the act of God. Even idolatrous and wicked men are sometimes God's instruments—God's hand. As often as the invaders marched on territory to vindicate a right or to punish an offence, they marched at God's command. If the motive for war was mere desire for plunder, or greed of land, or sheer military ambition, God was not in it. For God cannot sanction any form of iniquity, whether it be public or private. But war is often the scourge which God uses to vindicate his claims or to punish men; and though in outward appearance the invasion may *seem* only a piece of human malice, it is, in truth, an act of God's retribution. As God has his methods for chastising individual men, so has he his methods for chastising nations. His forms of penalty are myriadfold.

II. A SENTINEL APPOINTED. In such a time of peril as that of invasion the people knit themselves together for mutual defence. It was wise economy to choose one who should be drafted off from other occupation to fill the watchman's post. One was selected for the office specially suitable. *All* were not equally apt for this work. Such a man was chosen as had long resided on the border territory, one who knew the distant signs and prognostications of war, one who knew the *contour* of the country, and could occupy the best points of observation. An expert with eagle eye and cool nerve was selected. This was practical wisdom. By such a precaution war was sometimes averted. If the foe lost the advantage of secrecy, his plans were foiled. Or a resisting force could be gathered. Or possibly the removal of their cattle, or their own flight for a time, would avert the catastrophe. The season or other natural circumstance would come to their aid, and the deadly clash of arms be avoided. Immense gain might be attained by well posting a sentinel.

III. IT WAS A POST INVOLVING TREMENDOUS RESPONSIBILITY. The interests and fortunes and lives of the entire nation were placed in the keeping of one man. He was responsible to ten thousand persons of every rank and station. The safety of the empire hung on him. It was a distinctive honour to be selected for the post, a proof that he possessed remarkable qualities of soul; and this responsible occupation did the man good—it tended to develop all that was gracious and excellent in him. Responsible service is an ennobling and a joyous thing. It nourishes large and generous sympathy.

IV. FAITHFULNESS DEMANDED. The characteristic quality of a watchman is faithfulness. He might be deficient in many bodily and mental qualities, and yet be a good sentinel; but fidelity to duty—fidelity to the momentous trust—there must be, or he had better not be a watchman. Better, far better, appoint no watchman than have a man who is unfaithful. The blood of ten thousand innocent men justice might require at his unfaithful hands. Equally true is this of God's watchman, the prophet. The first and most central requisite is *faithfulness*. He may be deficient in bodily stature and strength, he may be deficient in learning and culture, he may be deficient in high birth and in social standing, but he *must* be gifted with trustworthiness. This is an essential. If he be unfaithful, he is of all men most unsuitable. If he accepts the office, and neglects its high duties, his guilt is immeasurable. *Better* for his own sake, better for others' sake, that he had never been God's messenger to men, than to lack fidelity in his tremendous trust. An unfaithful preacher must be held up to the world's execration.

V. POSSIBLE FAILURE. Yet even faithfulness will not ensure success. The people may not credit his warnings. They may deride his anxieties. They may persuade themselves that the peril is not so near as he avers. It is a matter that can wait. They may put down to official propriety, or to sensitive regard for his own credit, what ought to have been put down to wise solicitude and to approaching disaster. In a thousand cases men persist in deceiving themselves as to the nearness of the peril. Ten thousand men have fallen over the precipice of ruin through self-infatuation, and ten thousand more will follow. They will not learn practical wisdom from the folly and the ruin of others. And it becomes every one of us to lay the lesson upon our own hearts: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Oh for a prophet's vision to interpret the signs of the times!—D.

Vers. 10—20.—*Men's misconception of God's government.* Men are naturally prone to merge themselves in the nation. This was, perhaps, a stronger habit among the Jews than among us. They could not understand how that, while God punished the nation, he could protect the individual. Israel may be depressed in fortune, while yet Daniel and his companions are elevated. Sodom may be destroyed, but Lot shall be preserved.

I. SUFFERING OFTEN BLINDS MEN'S EYES TO GOD'S EQUITABLENESS. It is natural to suppose that luxurious prosperity is due to our merits; and, if adversity visits us, we judge ourselves to be hardly dealt with. Scarcely one man in a thousand realizes the fact that he deserves nothing, and that the common benefits of air and food are the unpurchased gifts of God. As soon as the suspension of Divine favours is felt we are disposed to complain. We cannot conceive that we have deserved such hardship. We see others, no more replete with virtue than ourselves, enveloped in silk and purple, riding abroad in gilded chariots. Does God really rule over the interests and fortunes of men? We have abandoned some evil courses: is not God going to reward us for this? Still, we can only think of our losses and our afflictions; we cannot see the higher benefits God is bringing to us. Through our blinding tears we can only see oppression and injustice. Through selfish tears we see only what we have lost, not what we have gained. We would rather discover injustice in God than iniquity within ourselves. Truly has it been said, "There's none so blind as those who will not see."

II. NATIONAL CALAMITY IS A SYMBOL OF PERSONAL PERDITION. The overthrow of a nation is something *visible*, impressive, startling. Yet it is not the worse thing that can happen to a man. He may have to transfer his political allegiance to another. He may have to live under a different set of laws and institutions. He may have to quit scenes in nature, with which he has been long familiar, for other scenes in a distant land. This loss, dishonour, banishment, are intended to remind him that there is a worse exile—an exile from his spirit's home, an exile from the kingdom of God, of which Canaan was but a symbol. To be compelled to dwell among idolaters was a gracious chastisement, to make his spirit recoil from the fear of dwelling for ever among the foes of God. And if the Hebrew exile took to heart the lesson, *that* banishment to Babylon might become to him salvation.

III. NATIONAL CALAMITY IS CONSONANT WITH PERSONAL WELL-BEING. The typical Jew was murmuring in Babylon that this destruction of the nation was incompatible with God's promise of life—a promise founded on personal repentance. "If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?" *Their* idea of life was free life in Judæa. God's idea of life was their return to allegiance and piety. "In his favour," and in this alone, they could find life. Consequently, a penitent Jew could have found the highest life, even while an exile in Babylon. If he personally felt and confessed his sin, if he reposed his soul on God's great mercy, if he bowed his spirit to God's will, and walked humbly with his God, *this* was life of the noblest kind. And, like a saint of later date, he could "rejoice even in tribulation." Better to dwell on Chebar's banks in the society of Jehovah than to dwell in the palaces of Jerusalem without God as a Friend. If God be my God, exile has no terror for me. Where God is, there is my heaven.

IV. RIGHTEOUSNESS MUST BE PERSONAL, NOT HEREDITARY NOR TRADITIONAL. The foolish and hurtful idea dwelt in the minds of the Jews that God's former favour to them as a nation was a guarantee for all future security. It was a species of antinomianism. Their maxim was, "Once righteous, always righteous, notwithstanding our deeds." They imagined that they could not fall from their exalted position. It is marvellous how deep-rooted in some minds this prejudice respecting traditional piety becomes. But the fervid piety of former days will avail us nothing if faith and love are now dead. It is only a living faith, a present submission, that God accepts. And if our former faith and love have evaporated, there is clear evidence that it was only a pretence, and not the reality. To be accepted of God, and to be accounted worthy of heaven, I personally must be righteous. The righteousness of the nation is nothing else than the righteousness of the component parts. And unless I individually am righteous in God's esteem, I shall be rejected and condemned in the great assize.

V. PERSONAL RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS ITS ROOT IN SINCERE REPENTANCE. Repentance

is the birth of right and honest feeling towards God. Whether our past feelings and actions have been wrong by way of omission or by way of guilty commission, the whole sin, greater or less, will be candidly confessed. Repentance does not consist in excessive grief, but in genuine turning—a complete change of mind. The repentant man opens his mind to the light. He allows the light of truth to enter every part of his nature. He yields to the light. He follows the light. He submits his thought, his choice, his will, his life, to God his King. He welcomes the indwelling and the inworking of the Holy Spirit. Righteousness is gradually wrought into the warp and woof of his nature, and so he becomes the righteousness of God through his Spirit.

VI. GOD'S COUNSELS ADVOCATING REPENTANCE ARE PROOFS OF HIS COMPASSION. Full well God knows that the possession of perfect righteousness is the noblest possession any man can acquire, and that this righteousness must begin in sincere and thorough repentance. We have a thousand proofs of God's compassion towards the erring children of men. We have them especially in the gift of his only Son, and in the gift of his Divine Spirit. But the crowning proof of his compassion is in stooping to plead with men's prejudices and pride. He remonstrates and entreats as if *he* were the party about to be benefited. Such self-forgetful love was never seen before on earth. It is distinctive of our redeeming God. And when he succeeds, and the human heart relents, then a new wave of joy rolls through the realm of heaven. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God."—D.

Vers. 21—29.—*Right, not might, the foundation of stable empire.* The shortest path to gaining empire over men *seems* to be might, or might conjoined with cunning. But "things are not what they seem." The throne whose foundations have been well and slowly laid will attain to greater permanence. The oak that has been rooting itself for a hundred years will resist many a howling tempest. Things unseen are the things that endure.

I. WE HAVE AN INSTANCE OF DIVINE CHASTISEMENT UNHEEDED. "The city is smitten." The city of which they had been so proud, the city which had seemed an impregnable stronghold, was captured by the invader. Their honoured sanctuary was levelled to the ground. Precious lives were sacrificed. Their honour was trampled in the dust. Judah's sceptre was broken. It had been long time announced that this would be the outcome of Jehovah's anger, and now the warning had been completely verified. If this painful event did not afflict their souls as an unmistakable chastisement for sin, then nothing would. The tree that remains fruitless, after skilful and severe pruning, is hopelessly barren. Affliction not converted into blessing becomes a great disaster. Black clouds that dissolve not in rain become magazines of thunderbolts.

II. AN INSTANCE OF FALLACIOUS REASONING. Although their numbers were decimated by war, they discovered that they were yet more in number than when Abraham dwelt in the land. He was in a minority of one, yet his posterity attained possession. These, his degenerate progeny, were still a strong body compared with solitary Abraham. Therefore their case was not utterly forlorn. True, they had been defeated, driven back, pressed into the barren hills and wastes of the land, yet they could still muster a thousand or two. This was enough to regain a conquest. Their confidence was in numbers—in themselves. "We are many; the land is given us."

III. THE IMPORTANT ELEMENT OMITTED. The vital omission was *this*, that Abraham had God at his back, and all the resources of heaven for his defence; they had set God against them as their foe, and all the forces of righteousness were leagued for their overthrow. Their banners were stained with vice and crime. They had forsaken God, and had sought unto idols. No marvel, then, that God had forsaken them. Violence, adultery, sensuality, and murder cried to Heaven for vengeance, and did not cry in vain. The pleasures of sin had blinded their eyes to the real facts of the case. They had forgotten that God had declared himself the Arbiter in the field of war, and a moment's reflection would have convinced them that God was with their adversary. The white escutcheon of their father Abraham had been by them basely defiled; and the worst feature was *this*—they perceived it not.

IV. AN INSTANCE OF JUDICIAL VISITATION. The great Judge of men had pronounced his verdict, and all their boastful expectations were reversed. Over against their boast,

"The land is given us for inheritance," God placed his edict, "The mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through." The ministers of Divine vengeance had received their commission, and the time for revoking it had passed. Wild beasts, the pestilence, and the sword had heard the fiat of God, and proceeded to do their deadly work. No fortress could protect them against such insidious enemies. Into every secret cave of the mountains wild beasts and miasma would force their way. The army of God is a hundredfold more difficult to oppose or to elude than any host of human king. Sane men will promptly yield.

V. THE GREAT LESSON LEARNT TOO LATE. "Then shall they know that I am the Lord." The light which they had sullenly barred out of their minds all their lifetime shall find its way within in the hour of death. Some men will listen to no warning voice except the warning voice of death. They learn at last what, had they learnt before, would have been their salvation. But now to them the lesson is useless; it serves only to admonish others. Crowds of men are practical infidels all through life, although they profess to believe in a reigning God; but death scatters the clouds of unbelief, and is a startling revelation of the invisible world. Amid the excitements and the turmoil of life they would not reflect, nor ponder, nor decide. They preferred to remain in the haze of doubt. At no point would they brace up their moral energy to say, "I know." Yet there comes an hour when faith, and righteousness, and God, and judgment will be real. "*Then* shall they know."—D.

Vers. 30—33.—*Superficial religiousness.* The Fall in Eden is an old story, yet it is repeated every day in our midst. Each one of us is in a garden of privilege. To each of us daily comes Divine commands and Divine prohibitions. The path by which we may rise to higher things, yea, to a higher life, lies open before us. It is straight and clearly seen. The path which runs downward to destruction is hard by. The tempter is still busy with his seductive whispers and false blandishments. Everything in our personal destiny hangs on *this* pivot, viz. whether we will listen to the voice of God or to the wily voice of the devil. Conscience or inclination—which shall rule us?

I. THE TRUE PROPHET BRINGS A MESSAGE FROM GOD. 1. A prophet possesses a spiritual organ by which he can receive communications from God. He is in touch with God. All his best faculties are enlarged and vitalized, so that the knowledge of God's will can be reached and received. To such a one God conveys special information, and delegates him to convey it to others. He is put in trust with the heavenly wisdom for the well-being of his fellow-men. 2. Such a revelation is known and recognized, partly by the internal character of the message, partly by the character and endowments of the man. Except where prejudice and guilty habits blind the vision, the hearers of the message feel and confess that it comes from a Divine origin. 3. Such a message must always conform to the known character of God. If the message is trivial, unimportant, puerile, baneful, it is clearly not from God. Falsehood is introduced somewhere. If it is a message salutary, elevating, purifying, benevolent, certainly it is Divine. It may run counter to a man's inclinations; it often will; nevertheless, if its tendency is to lead men to faith and holiness, it has the signature of God.

II. THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE EXCITES PUBLIC ATTENTION. 1. There is a craving to know the unknown. Men long to see the unseen—long to scan the future. Especially in times of adversity, in hours of serious illness, men yearn to know what the immediate future will bring. In times of health there is a prurient curiosity to gaze into the distant future, the great eternity. But in times of pressing personal danger a feeling of self-interest is vividly astir. Men naturally want to have clear and accurate knowledge respecting God, and respecting his dispositions manward. They want to know what the womb of the future contains for them. 2. The message will be welcome in proportion as it gratifies inclination, flatters pride, and opens a vista of sunny hope. Fidelity on the part of the prophet often exposes his message and himself to public contempt. 3. Shallow hearers discuss the messenger rather than his message. They "talked about him by the walls and in the doors of the houses." It was a matter of street-gossip rather than of heart-searching and personal profit. Was the preacher eloquent or dull? Was his voice mellifluent or harsh? Was his style plain or ornate? These are the trivial questions men ask, instead of—What word from God did he

bring? By what steps can we find reconciliation? What immediate duty presses for fulfilment? 4. Imitation of good men is a confession of their excellence. "They come as my people come, and sit as my people sit." Such conduct is grossly inconsistent—is self-condemning.

III. THE PREACHER'S MESSAGE MEETS WITH A SERIOUS HINDRANCE. 1. Obedience is difficult. To lend the ear is easy. Receiving the message is somewhat pleasant. It requires no serious effort. But to undo the past, this brings the ridicule of companions. To create new habits, this is laborious. To confess our past life to be folly, this is painful. 2. The heart is preoccupied. Its tendrils of affection have entwined about other things. They can more easily trust to visible wealth than to the invisible God. They know by experience that money brings luxury, ease, human honour, sensuous pleasures; and they have learnt to prize these. The joys of religion are unknown—far away in cloudland. The eagerness for gain chokes the Word, so that it becomes unfruitful. "The love of money is the root of all evil." Covetousness is idolatry. 3. Behind this opposition lies the degrading power of Satan. "He blinds the minds of those that believe not." He gives to gold a blandishment which belongs alone to the surface. By the excessive pursuit of worldly gain he deadens the moral sensibilities and destroys the eye of immortal hope.

IV. THE PROPHET'S MESSAGE, RESISTED, DARKENS HUMAN DESTINY. 1. Men's neglect of the warning in no way hinders the catastrophe. The evil announced by God still "cometh to pass." "Judgment slumbereth not." The wheels of God's chariot are all the while moving on. As the poet says—

"Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small."

2. Comprehension of the truth often comes too late. When overwhelmed with the predicted calamity, men wake up to the fact that "a prophet has been among them." They had thought him only a plain man, who sought to alarm them needlessly and at every inconvenient time. *Now* how totally different the matter seems! Alas! how often does the *sense* of eternal things visit the soul too late! 3. Then comes useless self-blame. The lost man naturally reproaches himself. In the new light that has dawned he sees the folly of blaming others. He lashes only himself. He becomes his own tormentor. That Being whose word cannot be broken says, "Lo, it will come!"—D.

Vers. 1—9.—*Ministerial and individual responsibility.* The supposition in the text is that it is a time of war and consequently of danger; that therefore the people choose one that lives near the boundary of the kingdom or the province, and appoint him as a watchman, to give the signal at the first approach of the enemy. It is not pressing the figurative very far to say that all the life of man below is a time of spiritual conflict; we are all engaged in a long, a lifelong campaign. The enemy whom we have to fight is strong, subtle, dangerous (see Eph. vi. 12); and it may well be that one here and another there should be chosen as a spiritual "watchman" to observe and to forewarn.

I. THE MINISTERIAL FUNCTION. Those who have accepted the post of the Christian minister to-day are in a very similar position to the Hebrew prophet. It is their province: 1. To keep well in view the movements of their time; to observe with great care the advances which are made on the one hand, and the withdrawals and retreats upon the other hand; to note with constant and sleepless vigilance the temper and spirit, the tendency and current, of the time. 2. To understand and to interpret all that is passing, in the light of revealed truth; to distinguish between a change of form and a decadence of life or a departure from Divine truth; to know what attitude should be taken up toward that which is new, and which approaches the people of God with professions of good will,—whether of welcome or resistance. 3. To utter the voice of truth, which is (or should be) the voice of Christ, with all promptitude, decision, earnestness, unflinching fidelity.

II. THE DUTY OF THE INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS. This is very clear; it is to *heed* and to *act*. 1. To give earnest heed to the warning that is uttered, to consider well whether it is not true, to have a mind prepared to receive the message. For as the watchman has been "taken" and been "set" by them (ver. 2), and is their chosen guardian, he

is entitled to their respect, while to his solemn monition a serious regard is due. 2. To act immediately on conviction; to place a distinct distance between themselves and the threatened evil; to keep the insidious theory, the subtle falsehood, the dangerous half-truth well out of their mind; to refuse any entrance to the perilous habit or the tainted practice; or, on the other hand, to welcome the old truth in its new form, render the old service in the new method, as the more suitable and the more excellent way.

III. THE LARGE ELEMENT OF MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY. The watchman who sleeps at his post or who fails to arouse his fellow-citizens when the enemy is in sight, is severely condemned (see vers. 6, 8). The spokesman for God who does not "watch for souls as one that must give account," who has no deep feeling of the seriousness of his position, and no abiding sense of the urgency and imperativeness of his duty, is gravely at fault; so also is that watchman (minister) who perceives but who does not speak, or who does not speak quickly, plainly, forcibly in the ears of the people,—he will have an account to give, and a judgment to bear, from which he may well shrink. But there is also—

IV. A LARGE REMAINDER OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY. "Every man must bear his own burden" here. No man can devolve it upon his religious teacher. *He* is only responsible for speaking the truth faithfully; that done, his soul is delivered (see vers. 5, 9). Whether we, as individual men and women, are assimilating Divine truth or are appropriating deadly error; whether we are forming healthy and life-preserving habits, or poisonous and pernicious ones; whether we are moving up the incline of heavenly wisdom and Christian purity, or descending the decline of folly and of wrong; whether we are exerting an elevating and redeeming influence, or a depressing and degrading one, upon our contemporaries and upon those who will succeed us—this must depend very largely indeed on *whom* we hear, and *how* we hear. Therefore let the Master say to us, "Take heed how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have [thinketh that he hath]" (Luke viii. 18).—C.

Vers. 10, 11.—*The hope and the way of life.* Taking these words apart from their immediate application, as we may do without departing from their spirit and inner meaning, we are invited to think of—

I. HUMAN HOPELESSNESS. "Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we pine away in them." The men into whose lips these words are put are very far from being the only ones to whom they apply. All men everywhere may say the same—all who live on in conscious departure from the will of God. 1. Sin bears its penalty with it; it enfeebles the body, it injures the mind, it lowers the life, it degrades the soul,—it robs of Divine favour, of spiritual worth, of abiding peace. 2. It may become an increasing burden. It *may* indeed lead down to a most dangerous and deplorable insensibility, so that the sinful man no more knows how serious and fatal is his condition than does the man who lies down to sleep in the snow, or he who talks freely and happily in a delirium; but often the conscious burden of sin rests with a heavy and growing weight upon the soul, and despondency leads down to despair. 3. It ends in hopelessness; the man feels that he is "pining away," that there is nothing for him in the future, his heritage is forfeited; there is nothing beyond but the gates of death. But he has not taken into his account—

II. THE DIVINE DISPOSITION. "As I live, . . . I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked," etc. There is much in this statement: 1. Regarded in its *negative* aspect. "God has no pleasure," etc. That may not seem much to us who have become habituated to think of him as a Divine Father; but it was very much indeed to those who had not thus learnt of Christ, very much indeed to those who lived in an age when the Divine powers were supposed to find a terrible satisfaction in the miseries they inflicted on their enemies. Then the cruelty of man was transferred, in thought, to the beings who were worshipped, and they were believed quite capable of taking pleasure in the sorrows and in the death of their devotees. But God tells us here that that is *not* his disposition. The reaping by guilty men of the full consequences of their sin against himself would give him *no* pleasure at all; it would not be to satisfy him that their course would go downward until it ended in death. 2. Regarded in its *positive*

aspect. God would "that the wicked turn from his way and live." If the *absence* of any desire on the part of the Supreme that sin should go on and down to death gives a gleam of hope to the hopeless, how much light may not be gained from the *presence* of a distinct and positive desire on his part that the sinner should live? If God wills that it should be so, there can be *no* occasion to despair; there must be reason, and strong reason, to hope. To know that this is the Divine disposition is a great thing indeed; it is to have left midnight a long way behind; it is to have entered the dawn of the morning. But we have much further to go into the light of day; for the prophet's message includes—

III. THE DIVINE CHALLENGE. "Turn ye . . . for why will ye die?" This includes: 1. *A summons to repentance.* Clearly repentance is an act which it is open to any soul to render at once if he will. It is not therefore either (1) the feeling of a certain amount of emotion, for this is not always at command; or (2) a certain amount of good works done or sacred services performed, for this can only be the issue of time. Repentance is the turning of the heart and of the will to God and righteousness; it is the act of the soul by which it turns away from its evil course of godlessness and wrong-doing, and turns toward the Divine Father with the full and fixed intention of henceforth serving him in the ways of righteousness. To do that which any and every soul may do and should do without a day's delay, God is summoning his disloyal servants (see Acts xvii. 30). 2. *A gracious and powerful appeal.* "Why will ye die?" Why should we die, when: (1) Death means so sad and so great a sacrifice—the loss of a human soul, capable of such beauty and such blessedness on the one hand, and of such baseness and such misery on the other hand? (2) God has done such great things to save us; has so loved us as to give his only begotten Son to die for us, and by his death to restore us. (3) The way of life is so free and so open to us all: "Whosoever believeth, . . . shall not perish, but have everlasting life." 3. The life that is offered us in Christ means all that eternal life *is found* to be here and *will prove* to be hereafter.—C.

Vers. 12—19.—*God's equal way.* These words bring out—

I. THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE SINNER. God gives him the opportunity of returning, and of recovering that which was lost (see previous homily). He is "not to fall in the day that he turns from his wickedness." 1. God condemns and warns him; he tells him that his sin is ruining him, leading him to death (ver. 14). 2. He hearkens and repents; has so deep a sense of his folly and his guilt that he turns utterly away, in heart and in life, from all his wrong-doing (vers. 14, 15). And then: 3. God takes him back freely and fully into his Divine favour (ver. 16). His sin is frankly forgiven him, and he "lives" unto God and in his sight. This opportunity is offered to: 1. The ignorant idolater who has been brought up in the dark shadows of superstition. 2. The man who, though brought up in the light of truth, has fallen into flagrant and shameful sin, into vice or crime. 3. The man who, while maintaining the proprieties of behaviour, and perhaps the semblance of devotion, keeps his heart closed against the truth and grace of Jesus Christ. To all of these, though they have lived through many years and even whole periods of sin, there is open the gateway of immediate return and of full reconciliation to God.

II. THE PERIL OF THE RIGHTEOUS. 1. *His God-given hope.* He looks for life: "He shall surely live" (ver. 13). The future before him is bright with many a precious promise; the further he goes the more he has to expect at the hands of the faithful and generous Giver. But let him not presume; here is: 2. *His serious danger.* He may, like the Jew, and like too many an erring Christian, imagine a favouritism on the part of the Supreme which does not exist, and, presuming upon it, may fall. If once the devout man loses his humility; forgets that he is but a weak, endeavouring human spirit; fosters in himself a sense of security; "trusts to his own righteousness;"—then he stands at once within the circumference of spiritual peril. It is "when he is (consciously) weak, then he is strong" (2 Cor. xii. 10). And, conversely, when he is confidently strong, then is he weak, then is he most exposed to the darts of the enemy: pride precedes a fall. 3. *His condemnation and his doom.* His former "righteousness will not deliver him;" for his iniquity and in his iniquity "he will die." No man living in sin may look up to God and say, "I was once pure," with any hope of

acceptance; God requires of us that we *be* pure in heart, loyal in spirit, upright in word and deed, or he cannot grant us his benediction or admit us to his home.

III. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN BOTH RESPECTS. 1. God is righteous in forgiving the sinful man and restoring him to fulness of life. The Pharisaic view of this act is that it is unrighteous, inasmuch as a guilty soul is taken back to favour and raised up to life and joy. But there are two things overlooked. (1) God is ever seeking the best in man; he is working towards purity and goodness. How can this be promoted in the sinful? In no way so well as by the extension of Divine mercy. Unrelieved penalty only crushes and condemns to a hopeless continuance in sin; but mercy implants hope,—it leads to penitence, and it ends in purity, in wisdom, in moral and spiritual well-being. (2) Though mercifully restored to life, the sinner does not fail to suffer; *some* penalty for past transgression he must pay. In the nature of things, or rather under the working of the wise and righteous laws of God, sin works immediate mischief in the soul, and it importantly affects the life; so that not even the abounding mercy of God makes it the same thing to a man whether he spends his earlier years in wisdom or in folly. 2. God is merciful even in condemning the backslider. For if he were to act otherwise, if he were to allow a man, because he had once been righteous, to fall into any sinfulness without condemning and punishing him, what licence he would be giving to iniquity, and how would he be multiplying transgression on every hand! It is in the true and lasting interest of our race, and of all his intelligent creation, that God affixes his rebuke and some appropriate penalty to all wrong-doing or wrong-being, in whomsoever it may be found. Thus the Divine Ruler and Father of men is righteous when he forgives, and is merciful when he condemns. His ways are equal, and if we fail to see it it is because we fail to recognize the profound righteousness of mercy, and the equally profound mercy of righteousness.—C.

Vers. 23—25.—*Ill-grounded hope.* The address of the prophet is delivered to that "miserable fraction in Judæa who dwelt among its desolations, and who, notwithstanding all they had seen and suffered of the righteous judgments of God, were still wedded to their sinful ways, and cherishing the most groundless hopes. . . . They were appealing in the most confident manner to their connection with Abraham, and on that ground assuring themselves of their right to possess the land of Canaan. 'He, though but one, got the land for an inheritance, and we, his descendants, who are a greatly larger company than he could boast of, may we not justly expect to be kept in possession of it?'" (Fairbairn). The prophet dismisses this claim in the language of decisive disallowal and of strong rebuke. He tells them that, so far from God raising their position and making them possessors and rulers in the land, they may look for more judgments from his hand, for their iniquities were loudly demanding them. Here were—

I. MEN MISTAKING THEIR SPIRITUAL POSITION. It was much, in their mind, that they "had Abraham to their father." How little that mere genealogical fact weighed in the estimate of God we know from the language of the great prophet John, and of that One who was so much greater than he (Matt. iii. 9; John viii. 33—39). While boasting of their descent from Abraham, they were, in character and conduct, everything that Abraham was not—everything from which that "friend of God" would have turned away with holy indignation (see vers. 25, 26). Consequently, they were numbered amongst the most disloyal subjects of Jehovah, and were the objects of his most severe displeasure. Their confidence in themselves was utterly misplaced. They may be said to be the spiritual ancestors of a very numerous seed. How many are they who because (1) they have been born and brought up in the midst of some Christian community, or because (2) they have gone through the formal rites of some Christian Church, imagine themselves to be the sons of God, enjoying his Divine favour and subjects of his spiritual kingdom! Yet the state of their heart, and (it may be) even the tenor of their life, effectually disprove it. Their hearts are far from God, and their deeds from uprightness and Christian worth.

II. MEN DELUDING THEMSELVES WITH A FALSE HOPE. This, of course, follows from the other. The remnant of the Jews were hoping to become the possessors of the land, and to rise to the position from which their countrymen had fallen. But their hopes were vain, for they were built upon mistake and error. We may be looking forward to

some position of authority and influence in the Church of Christ, or to a home in the heavenly country; but we have no right whatever to expect either of these if our claim is based either on fleshly connections or on the formalities of devotion, and the sooner we awake from our dream the better will it be for us. We must understand the one and only ground for hope in the future is our real, spiritual union with Jesus Christ, and the consequent rectitude of life which is the invariable and happy fruit of it.

III. A FAITHFUL HUMAN TEACHER. It is a very painful thing to extinguish a pleasant but a false hope in the heart. Yet it has sometimes to be done at all costs. And kinder far is it to destroy that hope when it is budding than to let it grow to maturity when it has to suffer a severe and sad extinction. The faithful course is always the kind one as well as the wise one, when all things are counted.—C.

Vers. 30—32.—*The test of piety.* If we read "of thee" instead of "against thee" (ver. 30, marginal reading), and understand that the captives by the Chebar were talking in not unfriendly fashion of the prophet, all the parts of this deliverance are consistent, and they supply a valuable lesson for all time. We learn what is the true test of piety; that it is found—

I. NOT IN ATTENDANCE ON RELIGIOUS ORDINANCES. These Jews were saying to one another, "Come and hear," etc., and they not merely exhorted one another thus, but they *went and heard*—they sat and listened to the truth as it was spoken by Ezekiel. But they were far from being right with God for so doing. We may be very attentive upon all "means of grace," may never absent ourselves from the "house of the Lord," may go solemnly and even reverently through all the outward ordinances of the Christian faith, and yet remain outside the kingdom of Christ. None were more constant in their "devotions" than the Pharisees, and none more blameless in their attitude and demeanour,—and none more really ungodly than they.

II. NOT CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRUTH. These captives of Babylon were habitually speaking about Ezekiel, and no doubt discussing his prophetic deliverances; they were probably very keen disputants, very fine analysts of his sentences, very careful hearers of his doctrine. But they were not "the children of wisdom" and heirs of the best inheritance. We, too, may take a very systematic view of the faith we hold, or we may be clever critics of the message to which we listen in the sanctuary, we may be able to discuss with much special learning and a great show of piety the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, but we may be very wide indeed of that knowledge of God which constitutes eternal life.

III. NOT SENSIBILITY. These hearers by the river-side were affected by what they heard. They "liked" Ezekiel well. His discourses charmed them much; they felt moved by his words as he spoke with that directness, fervour, and imaginative force which characterized his utterance, and which, whenever put forth, never do fail to attract and to delight. But it is one thing to be moved by sacred eloquence, and quite another thing to be filled with true conviction and to be governed by Christian principle. They who depend on the exciting impulses that come from the large assembly, the strains of powerful music, or the fervid addresses of the pulpit, for the movements of their soul, are leaning on the reed, are building on the sand. The piety that will be wanted for the long path of duty, for the deep waters of trouble, for the searching fires of temptation, for the hour of heroism, for the day of judgment, must go deeper down into the nature of spiritual reality than the stratum of sensibility.

IV. BUT OBEDIENCE. "They do them not." That was their defect; *there* was found the fatal omission. They had not the spirit of obedience. We know what the Master said on this subject (see Matt. vii. 24—27). And that which Jesus Christ especially and emphatically calls upon us to do, which it is a fatal error to leave undone, is (1) to come into close personal union with himself (Matt. xi. 28, 29; John vi. 35, 50, 51; xv. 1—7; 1 John iii. 23); (2) to follow him in the path of purity, devotion, love.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Ver. 1.—**And the word of the Lord**, etc. As no date is given, we may infer that what follows came as an almost immediate sequel to that which precedes it. The kernel of the chapter is found in the Messianic prophecies of vers. 23, 24, as the first stage in the restoration of Israel which is beginning to open to the prophet's gaze. We can hardly avoid seeing in it the deliberate expression of words that had been spoken by Ezekiel's master (Jer. xxiii. 1—4), and which in his case also were followed by a directly Messianic announcement. In Matt. ix. 36, still more in John x. 1—16, we can scarcely avoid recognizing the distinct appropriation of the words to himself by him of whom they both had spoken. So far as we may venture to speculate on the influence, so to speak, of the words of the prophets of the Old Testament on our Lord's human soul, we may think of these as having marked out for him the work which he was to do, just as we may think of Ps. xxii. and Isa. liii. as having pointed out to him the path of suffering which he was to tread.

Ver. 2.—**Prophesy against the shepherds of Israel**, etc. Our modern associations with the words, our use of terms like "the pastoral office," "the pastoral Epistles," lead us to think of the priests and prophets, the spiritual guides of the people, as being those whom the prophet has in view. In the language of the Old Testament, however, as in that of Homer ('Iliad,' i. l. 263; ii. l. 85, etc.), the shepherds of the people are always its kings and other civil rulers (1 Kings xxii. 17; Ps. lxxvii. 20; lxxviii. 71; Jer. xxiii. 1—6), and those whom Ezekiel had in his thoughts were the tyrannous rulers of the house of David, like Jehoiakim and Zedekiah and their satellites. Our Christian thoughts of the word are the outcome of the leading of John x. 1—16; xxi. 15—17; 1 Pet. v. 2—4; Acts xx. 28; but it is probably true that even there the original thought is still dominant. Christ is the "good Shepherd," because he is the true King. His ministers are shepherds as being officers in his kingdom. **Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?** The question is an appeal to the universal conscience of Israel and of mankind. No shepherd was worthy of his name who did not do that which the very name implied. He that neglects that duty is simply as a hireling or a robber (John x. 10, 12).

Ver. 3.—**Ye eat the fat.** The LXX. and the Vulgate, following a different reading, give *milk*, and, as "killing" comes in the next clause, this is probably preferable (comp. 1 Cor. ix. 7; Isa. vii. 22).

Ver. 4.—**The diseased have ye not strengthened.** The verbs indicate the difference between the "diseased," *i.e.* the weak sheep (comp. Isa. xl. 11; Ps. lxxviii. 71) and the sick, that were suffering from more definite maladies. **So the broken** are the sheep that have fallen from a rock and thus maimed themselves. Each case required its appropriate treatment, and none had met with it.

Ver. 5.—**And they were scattered.** The words are an echo of 1 Kings xxii. 17, and are, in their turn, echoed by Matt. ix. 36. The words that follow paint the sufferings of the exiles who left their homes and were scattered among the heathen in the days of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. Of these the kings took no heed, and shut themselves up in the luxurious seclusion of their palace.

Vers. 7—10.—**As I live, saith the Lord God**, etc. The sentence of the Supreme Judge, of the "chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. v. 4), that follows, is naturally preceded by a recapitulation of the guilt of the tyrannous rulers—the "idol" or sham shepherds of Zech. xi. 17 (comp. also Zech. x. 3). Both chapters should be studied as throwing light on the teaching of the earlier prophet. It may be noted also how the thought enters into Ezekiel's vision of the restored Israel (ch. xlv. 8—10).

Ver. 11.—**Behold, I, even I**, etc. The words, as the last reference shows, and as we find in vers. 23—31, do not exclude, rather they imply, human instrumentality, just as our Lord's do in Matt. xviii. 12 and Luke xv. 4—7; but they reveal the truth that Jehovah is the true Shepherd of his people. Not the sweet psalmist of Israel only, but the lowest outcast, might use the language of Ps. xxiii., and say, "The Lord is my Shepherd." He will gather the sheep that have been scattered in the "cloudy and dark day," the day of the Lord's judgment (ch. xxx. 3). For the prophet the words pointed to that vision of a restored Israel, which was dominant in the expectations both of Isaiah (or the deutero-Isaiah) in ch. xl.—xlviii., and in Jeremiah (xxxiii. 12—18), which floated before the minds of the apostles (Acts i. 6), and to which even St. Paul looked forward as the solution of the great problems of the world's history (Rom. ix.—xi.).

Vers. 13—15.—**On the mountains of Israel by the rivers.** The picture of the pleasant pasture-lands of Judah, almost, as it were, an expansion of Ps. xxiii., of the mountains which are not barren and stony, of the streams that flow calmly in the **inhabited**

places of the country, serves as a parable of that which is to follow on the restoration of Israel. The sheep that had been wandering so long in the wilderness should at last lie down in **a fat pasture** (ver. 15), and the tender care of the Shepherd should watch with an individualizing pity over each sheep that had been brought back. Every broken limb should be bound up. Every sickness should be treated with its appropriate means of healing.

Ver. 16.—**I will destroy the fat and the strong.** What follows introduces another feature into the parable, and is hardly less than an anticipation of the great scene of judgment in Matt. xxv. 32. The "fat and the strong," as contrasted with the "broken" and the "sick," are, when we interpret the parable, the noble and wealthy who, under the kings of Judah, had been allowed to work their evil will upon the people. Of these he says that he **will feed them with** (better, *in*) **judgment**, that for them there must be the discipline of punishment. They too are his sheep, but they require a different treatment from the others.

Ver. 17.—**Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle.** It may be worth while to note, as modern English usage tends to limit the range of the word, that it is commonly used in the Old Testament of sheep rather than of kine (Gen. xxx. 34—42; xxxi. 8—12). In Gen. xxx. 32 we have the same Hebrew word as that which Ezekiel uses. **Between the rams and the he-goats.** The words, at first, seem to point to a division like that of Matt. xxv. 32, and may, perhaps, have suggested it. Here, however, the contrast lies, not between the sheep and goats as such, but between the strong and the weak of each class. The "rams" are as much the object of the shepherd's discipline of judgment as the "he-goats." Both stand as the representative of the rapacious self-seeking classes who oppressed the poor and needy, and, not content with being the first to feed on the pastures and to drink of the waters, trampled on the former and defiled the latter. So in the next verse the contrast lies between the "fat cattle," whether sheep or goats, and the "lean."

Ver. 23.—**And I will set up one Shepherd over them.** Here, more than ever, we have an anticipation of our Lord's teaching in John x. 1—18. He claims to be the Fulfiller, as of the prediction of Isa. xl. 11 and Jer. xxiii. 1—3, so also of this. He, the "Son of David," is the David that inherits that among other promises. It has to be noted, however, that Ezekiel's words paint, less distinctly than those of the earlier prophets, the picture of an individual Messianic king, and seem rather to point, as do those of Zech. xii. 10 (I do not now discuss the date of that prophecy), to a line of true rulers, each faithfully representing the ideal David as the faithful Ruler, the true Shepherd of his people (Ps. lxxviii. 71; comp. ch. xxxvii. 24; xlv. 8, 9).

Ver. 25.—**I will make with them a covenant of peace.** The whole verse is an echo of Lev. xxvi. 6, in part also of Hos. ii. 20 [English version, ver. 18]. The words are less definite as to the nature of the covenant than those of Jer. xxxi. 31, but probably the same thought underlies both. Sins are pardoned, the capacity for righteousness, righteousness itself, are given. In bright contrast with the picture of a country haunted by the lion, the jackal, and the wolf—the "evil beasts" of ch. xiv. 15—so that no man could pass through without risk, we have that of a land from which such evil beasts have been cleared out, so that men may sleep safely even in the **wilderness and the woods.** The language, however, is figurative rather than literal. As the "sheep" are the people of the true Israel, so the **evil beasts** must, at least, include the enemies, Chaldeans, Edomites, Philistines, and others, that had before made havoc of them.

Ver. 26.—**Round about my hill.** Ezekiel's thoughts, like those of Micah iv. 1 and Isa. ii. 2, cluster round the hill of Zion, the mountain of Jehovah, as the centre of the restored Israel. In that land, as the prophet saw it here, and still more in the closing vision of his book (ch. xlvii. 12), there were, outwardly as well as spiritually, to be **showers of blessing** (the phrase is peculiar to Ezekiel), and the land should yield its fruits.

Vers. 27, 28.—**When I have broken the bands of their yoke.** The underlying meaning of the figurative language of ver. 25 is now utterly explained. Israel is to be delivered from its Chaldean and other oppressors. The "yoke shall be broken." They shall no more be **a prey to the heathen. None shall make them afraid.**

Ver. 29.—**A plant of renown.** The words at first suggest the thought that Ezekiel was reproducing the ideal picture of the "branch," the "root," the "stem," the "plant," of Isa. xi. 1; Jer. xxiii. 5; Zech. vi. 12. Here, however, the word is collective, and is translated "plantation" in ch. xvii. 7, "planting" in Micah i. 6; Isa. lx. 21; lxi. 3. It can hardly be taken as speaking of more than the general fertility of the land. The rendering of the LXX., "a plant of peace," obviously implies a different reading (*shalom* instead of *shem*), and this Cornill has adopted in his text. So taken, the words naturally lead on to what follows—the promise that men should **no more be consumed with hunger.**

Ver. 31.—**And ye my flock.** The great utterance, we might call it the "ode of the shepherds," comes round to the point from which its second portion started (ver. 11). All blessings were summed up in the thought that, behind every representative of the Father's care, the ideal David and his house, there was the eternal relationship between Jehovah and his people, even that of the Shepherd and his sheep. The LXX. omits the words "are men," and here also is followed by Cornill.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—10.—*Shepherds denounced.* I. THEIR RESPONSIBILITY. Ezekiel now turns from the people to their leaders. Theirs is the greatest guilt. They were placed in positions which led to much being expected of them. Their failure means a corresponding guilt. The princes and priests, the political leaders and the religious teachers, would be included under the designation "shepherds." The same two classes and other varieties may be seen to-day; *i.e.* political rulers, Christian ministers, leaders of public movements, public writers; all who influence others in thought and life are like Israel's shepherds. Note the grounds of the great responsibility of such people. 1. *Privilege.* The shepherds have the honour of being set over the flock. Position is a privilege; it brings a responsibility. 2. *Power.* (1) There is the natural power of superior gifts. The shepherd is higher in mental power than his sheep. Great intellectual gifts bring with them a sort of pastoral responsibility in regard to weaker minds. (2) There is the superadded power of office. The shepherd is appointed over the sheep. All who are placed in positions of influence are made especially responsible.

II. THEIR WICKEDNESS. 1. *Positive wrong-doing.* (1) Self-seeking. The shepherds feed themselves instead of feeding the flock. They are mere hirelings, not true shepherds (John x. 13). All who undertake public office for the sake of private gain belong to this disgraceful category. It would be hypocritical to suppose that the shepherd should not consider his wages. But his fault is when he puts his profit above his duty. (2) Cruelty. The shepherds "kill them that are fed." They are worse than hirelings; they behave like robbers and wolves. So was it in the Middle Ages, when bishops preyed on their flocks. The same is true of all tyrannous governments under which rulers oppress the people for their own advantage. It applies to the use of power and influence for selfish advantage to the injury of others, as in making a living out of pernicious literature, etc. 2. *Negative negligence.* Looking after themselves, the wicked shepherds neglect their flock. (1) The flock is not fed. It is the duty of the preacher to feed Christ's sheep (John xxi. 16). If he is making his own profit to the neglect of this duty the people may starve for lack of the bread of life. (2) The sick are not tended. Care for the sick sheep is an especial duty of the true shepherd. Sick souls need sympathy and help. The poor, the unfortunate, the sorrowful, the fallen, are all neglected by self-seeking leaders. (3) The sheep are scattered. There is no bond of union. The sheep do not listen to the voice of the bad shepherd. He forgets to call them, or does so in a listless, unattractive manner, or makes himself uninteresting to them, so that they will not respond. Bad leaders scatter the Church. (4) Wild beasts ravage the flock. David delivered his flock from a lion and a bear. "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John x. 11). But the hireling fleeth at the sight of the wolf (John x. 13). With bad leaders men are a prey to evil and error.

III. THEIR DOOM. 1. *God's opposition.* "Behold, I am against the shepherds." They may be stronger than the sheep, but God is stronger than they are. Faithlessness in office provokes God's great wrath. 2. *Hopeless requirements.* "I will require my flock at their hand." But it is lost! 3. *Loss of office.* The bad shepherds are dismissed. The unfaithful servant is deprived of his talent (Matt. xxv. 28). Disgrace, dismissal, ruin, are the punishments of unfaithful service.

Vers. 11—13.—*Seeking lost sheep.* I. THE SHEEP ARE LOST. Israel was scattered among the nations like sheep that have wandered from the fold and are lost in the wilderness. Souls have been scattered from their shelter and have wandered into distant places. Note some of the characteristics of the lost sheep. 1. *They were originally in the fold.* This refers to Jews rather than to heathen, to backsliding Christians, to children of Christian homes; but also in a general way to all, because all men begin

life in innocent childhood not far from the bosom of God. 2. *They have gone into distant places.* Israel was driven abroad locally; souls depart from their homes spiritually, (1) in thought, when the old beliefs are abandoned for the wilderness of doubt; (2) in life, when the old ways are left, and God and duty are neglected. Heaven then recedes into the background. 3. *They were scattered.* No bond of union remains. The flock, which was a unit, becomes broken, and there are now only separate sheep. Error and sin disintegrate society. 4. *They were lost in darkness.* The disaster happened "in the cloudy and dark day." The time of doubt, trouble, or temptation is one of danger. Then souls may be cast adrift for want of wise and tender shepherding. 5. *They suffered through the neglect of the shepherds.* The great sin is that of the faithless leaders.

II. THEY ARE SOUGHT. The shepherds lost them; God seeks them. God himself desires that the lost should be restored. For he values them as the farmer values his flock. It is not a matter of indifference to God that souls should perish. He does not leave the sheep to come home, prepared to welcome them on their return; he seeks them. He does not only hold himself ready to welcome the returning penitent. He goes forth to seek him. The housewife sweeps the house to find her lost piece of silver (Luke xv. 8). The father goes to meet the prodigal son (Luke xv. 20). 1. God seeks *by his providence.* The movements of life should bring us back to God. 2. He seeks *by his prophets.* Ezekiel was seeking the lost sheep. The Bible is sent forth as God's means of seeking the lost. So is all true preaching of the gospel. 3. He seeks *by his Son.* Christ came first to seek "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. xv. 24), and then all lost sheep. Christianity is a search for the lost.

III. THEY ARE FOUND. "I will bring them out from the peoples," etc. When God finds a soul, he restores it. He may find it in the wilderness; if so, he will not leave it there. The shepherd may find his sheep buried in the snow; it may be hard to dig them out; he may even have to carry them home on his shoulders. If he is strong enough he will do this. God not only finds; he restores. 1. *He brings the sheep home.* Israel is restored to her own land. Souls are restored to their home in God. 2. *He feeds them.* They must be hungry in the wilderness, far from the green pastures. So "he feeds them upon the mountains of Israel." The father kills the fatted calf for his restored son. Christ gives his body as bread of life for his people. 3. *He refreshes them.* The sheep are led "by the rivers." They thirsted in the wilderness; now they can drink and live. God gives new life and peace to his restored children. Christ gives "living water" (John iv. 10). When God finds a lost soul, that soul is safe—restored, fed, refreshed by his grace.

Ver. 17.—*The flock divided.* When the flock is found it is not all treated alike. The rough, horned cattle are separated from the gentle, helpless sheep. Israel was not to be restored to prosperity as a nation without discrimination. God would judge between the different characters of exiles. Judgment of individuals is here referred to.

I. GOD DEALS WITH INDIVIDUALS AS WELL AS WITH NATIONS. As there are national sins, so there are national punishments, and also national mercies. The whole nation must in a measure participate in these things. But over and above such matters there is an individual treatment of separate men and women. No man is safe from trouble by belonging to a prosperous nation. God's returning favour to a community may leave hardened rebellious souls still in the dark.

II. GOD JUDGES THE INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF CHURCHES. No man is safe just because he lives in Christendom, neither is any one safe because he is a member of any Church. There are rough, cruel animals in the flock, which are injurious to others, and unworthy of their privileges. In the final judgment the sheep will be separated from the goats (Matt. xxv. 32), and in dealing with Churches the same method of discrimination must be applied. Indeed, it is worse for one who is not a Christian to be enrolled in the membership of a Church, than for him to remain outside. His position is false and hypocritical. Moreover, his presence is injurious to the well-being of the worthy members. If the rough, horned animals were abroad in the wilderness, they would do little harm. The mischief arises when they are crowded together with the sheep in one fold.

III. IT IS THE DUTY OF CHURCHES TO EXERCISE DISCIPLINE. Care should be taken

as to who are entrusted with the highest privileges of Christian fellowship. It is easier not to encourage the unworthy to enter than to eject them after they have made themselves obnoxious to the community. Nothing can be more foolish than to enlarge the nominal roll of a Church by including doubtful names. A wise teacher has said, "It would be well if we had fewer Christians, and better ones."

IV. THERE IS A DISCIPLINE WHICH BELONGS ONLY TO GOD. We can regulate the conditions of membership in organized societies. But we cannot really determine who are true members of Christ's flock. Therefore, in excluding the apparently unfit from a Church, we cannot, we dare not, pretend to pronounce a sentence of excommunication upon them. Much less are we justified in forcibly stamping out heresy, schism, and, what is far worse, worldly and sinful professions of Christianity, by the rough treatment of persecution. Wheat and tares must both grow together until the harvest (Matt. xiii. 30). Then, indeed, God will judge. The great Fisherman will divide his own fish when he brings the net to land (Matt. xiii. 48).

Ver. 23.—*The one shepherd.* In place of the many unworthy shepherds who have fattened themselves by spoiling the flock of Israel, God will now give his people one good Shepherd, reviving the royal line of David. The shepherd of Bethlehem had been a true protector of his people. He is to appear again in his great Descendant. No doubt Ezekiel's contemporary readers would look for a restoration of the temporal monarchy, as Christ's disciples looked for it (Acts i. 6). But such a restoration was never accomplished. The prophecy is fulfilled in a higher though an unexpected way by Christ as our good Shepherd.

I. THE PERSON OF THE SHEPHERD. "My servant David." Jesus Christ is the only person to whom these words can apply. Not only was he of the family of David; he realized to the full the ideal that David set forth in broken lights and failed to attain himself. He is the true David, the true Shepherd-King. Thus amid the sorrows of the exile, the disconsolate captives are cheered by a vision of the coming Christ, though as yet but vaguely and dimly discerned. We, with fuller knowledge, can turn from our disappointments and failures and find consolation in the Christ who has come and who is ever in our midst. Perhaps if the old shepherds had not been so unworthy, this wonderful prediction of the new Shepherd would not have been made. The disappointments of worldly confidence drive us to Christ. When earthly friends "fail or leave us," we need the true Friend who "sticketh closer than a brother." If Christian ministers have been unworthy, Christ abides faithful. Perhaps too much confidence was given to the human instruments; then the shock of discovering this to be misplaced may not be wholly hurtful; it may help the Church to look away from men and trust only in Christ.

II. THE APPOINTMENT OF THE SHEPHERD. He is set up by God. God sent Christ. It is God's will that his scattered sheep should be restored. That was stated earlier (see vers. 11, 12). Now we see how it is to be done. Christ is to be the new Shepherd who will seek and find the lost sheep. He comes to us thus with all the authority of his Father. He is called God's "Servant"—a remarkable and unusual expression for the Messiah. This reminds us of "the Servant of the Lord" in the latter part of Isaiah. The name was recalled by St. Peter when preaching to the Jews (Acts iii. 13). St. Paul tells us that in his great humiliation Christ took on him the form of a servant (Phil. ii. 7). This agrees with the whole spirit of the life of our Lord, who came not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him. It implies a rebuke of the bad shepherds, who had only pleased themselves and so neglected their Master's interests. They were too proud to consider themselves servants. But the great Son of David is willing to be a Servant.

III. THE WORK OF THE SHEPHERD. 1. *He rules the flock.* He is "set over" the sheep. The shepherd has authority over the flock. They are required to follow him. He shuts them up in the fold at night. Christ is King, as the Greater David. He is appointed to rule his flock as the Shepherd and Bishop of souls. If we would profit by his care we must obey his voice. 2. *He feeds the flock.* They would starve in the wilderness. The shepherd can lead them into the green pastures. He can supply them with winter stores. Christ feeds his people with his own body and blood. 3. *He saves the flock.* Though not stated in this verse, and perhaps not directly following

from the preceding verses, this is very prominent in our Lord's own description of his work. By the sacrifice of his own life he saves his sheep (John x. 15). The favourite picture of the persecuted early Christians, on the walls of the catacombs at Rome, is perhaps the choicest of all representations of Christ—viz. the good Shepherd.

Ver. 25.—"*A covenant of peace.*" I. THE MAKING OF THE COVENANT. A covenant is an agreement between two parties. But in the case of covenants between God and man this agreement is not arrived at after the fashion of human bargaining, in which the two who are concerned meet on equal terms. The covenant is made by God and offered to man, by whom it has to be accepted in order that it may take effect. We meet with several successive covenants—with Adam, with Noah, with Abraham, with Israel in the Law. Jeremiah promises a new covenant (Jer. xxxi. 31). A similar idea is here presented by Ezekiel. The old arrangement has broken down. For a time, the people of God are outlawed exiles, cut off from their ancient privileges, with little hope for the future. Now they are assured that God will not forsake them. It is impossible to renew the old covenant; but a new one shall be granted. God now approaches us in the gospel with that new covenant which Christ said was given in his blood (Luke xxii. 20). It was given to the world in the work of Christ. But it is ratified afresh with every soul that accepts its conditions—viz. repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts iii. 19, 26). All who thus enter into it enjoy the privileges of God's covenant mercies—mercies promised and assured to God's people.

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE COVENANT. It is essentially a covenant of peace. Every covenant is intended to be of this character. It is to prevent misunderstandings, to define mutual relations, to harmonize reciprocal actions. It is, in fact, a sort of treaty; and treaties, as long as they are observed, are instruments of peace. But the new covenant is emphatically and in a very special manner one of peace. 1. *It endorses the restoration of peace between God and man.* Sin is a breach of the peace, pardon is the making of peace. The restored Jews were brought into relations of peace with God. Christ reconciles us to God. 2. *It signalizes the establishment of peace between man and his fellow-man.* Christ is our peace in regard to mutual human relations. He breaks down "the middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile (Eph. ii. 14). He brings peace on earth (Luke ii. 14). 3. *It is the outward evidence of internal peace.* Christ gives peace to the soul. The covenant assures his people that this peace is sound and solid (John xiv. 27).

III. THE FRUITS OF THE COVENANT. The evil beasts are to depart and the people are to dwell safely in the open pastures and even sleep in the woods without danger. The departure of man is followed by an incursion of wild beasts. Lions came into the land when it was much depopulated by the Captivity. Then it would only be safe for people to live in close communities. At the present day we never see in Palestine those scattered farmhouses and cottages that give so much picturesqueness to rural England. The people all live in villages or towns. That must be a very safe condition of the country which would admit the manner of living described in our text. A similar condition spiritually is brought about under the new covenant of Christ. The wild beasts of haunting sins and prowling temptations are driven away. It is possible to enjoy a sense of freedom and security when under the protection of Christ. To plant one's homestead in the midst of the pasturage, to be able to sleep out in the woods in the summer-time when at work far from home, would mean much comfort and happiness in a safe and settled community. Such a condition is typical of the citizen of the kingdom of heaven, and though certainly it is not yet fully enjoyed, it will be when the reign of Christ is perfectly established.

Ver. 26.—"*Showers of blessing.*" The grateful rain in a semi-tropical country, that brings fruitfulness to the earth and refreshment to man and beast, is suggestive of the Divine grace that comes on parched and weary souls.

I. SHOWERS OF BLESSING ARE NEEDED. It is a sign of miserable deadness when any Church or soul can be satisfied to continue in the dull routine of formal service without receiving any refreshing Divine grace. The first awakening from such a condition of torpor must result in a great thirst of spirit. The need is indeed such that all might well feel it, viz.: 1. *Individual souls.* Each soul needs a blessing. It is

sad to be on the margin of a shower, perhaps to receive some of the dust that precedes it, yet to have no droppings of its refreshing water. 2. *Active servants of God.* The preacher, the missionary, the Sunday school teacher, the Christian worker in all kinds of service, need, greatly need, showers of blessing (1) in their own hearts, to strengthen and cheer, to stimulate and rouse; (2) in their work. 3. *The Church.* Deadness seizes the Church without a Divine blessing. Worldliness, formalism, narrowness, selfishness, then degrade and corrupt it. The Church sadly needs a Divine benediction. 4. *The world.* All men need what few men seek—the grace and aid of God. The old weary earth thirsts and pines unconsciously for a new Pentecost.

II. SHOWERS OF BLESSING COME FROM HEAVEN. 1. *Their source.* This is above us. Showers fall from the clouds that sail far over our heads. We must look up for the blessing. Men put too much trust in the earth. The most fertile land, without rain, would be a Sahara Desert. The most capable and energetic human work needs grace from above. Paul plants, Apollos waters, and God gives the increase (1 Cor. iii. 6). 2. *Their descent.* The showers are formed in the clouds, but they do not remain there. It is disappointing to see black clouds gather in a season of drought, and then pass away without shedding a drop of rain. Showers are descending waters. Blessings are not only promised and retained in the treasury of heaven; they come down and water the earth.

III. SHOWERS OF BLESSING DESCEND IN ABUNDANCE. It would take long for men with watering-cart and hose to distribute the moisture that is spread over a wide area in an hour by one summer shower. God blesses richly and abundantly. His grace is widespread. Every root of grass in the meadow comes in for a share of the shower; every leaf in the forest is cleansed and refreshed. Moreover, the result is done with the utmost gentleness. It is a shower, not a flood. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass" (Ps. lxxii. 6).

IV. SHOWERS OF BLESSING COME AT VARIOUS SEASONS. It is not always raining. Palestine had its former and its latter rain. Showers alternate with sunshine in our April weather. There are seasons of especial blessing. It may not be well for us to be always receiving the most stimulating kind of Divine grace. Nor is it possible for us to be perpetually cheered. Yet we can and should pray for blessing, and hail the cloud no bigger than a man's hand as the promise of coming showers.

V. SHOWERS OF BLESSING ARE FOLLOWED BY BEAUTY AND FRUITFULNESS. How fair and fresh the earth looks after a spring shower! Then "the dainty flowers lift up their heads," the grass shines in its greenest hues, and the very ground is fragrant. The world, the Church, the soul of man, will wear a new beauty and gladness, and bring forth fruit to the glory of God, when heavenly showers of blessing have been received. Well may we pray for them with more than Elijah's earnestness!

Ver. 29.—"*A plantation of renown.*" Restored Israel is to be a plantation of renown. The Israel of God, the Church of Christ, may be considered as of the same character.

I. THE CHURCH IS A DIVINE PLANTATION. 1. *It is planted by God.* A plantation is not a wild, primeval forest. It is a wood the trees of which have been carefully selected and set in the soil by the hands of men. God plants his people. (1) He originates the life of the soul. (2) He determines the position and sphere of individual activity. (3) He calls men into his Church. 2. *It is a community.* A plantation is not a single tree, nor is it the scattering of a few separate trees over the fields. It is a collection of plants. "God setteth the solitary in families" (Ps. lxviii. 6). He has ordained domestic and social life. Christ founded the Church. Brotherly fellowship is a Divine ordinance. 3. *It is carefully tended.* The woodman visits the plantation, removing dead boughs, keeping the soil clean, destroying dangerous parasitic growths, etc. God does not leave his people alone. They are not like the neglected tropical forest, in which the wreck of the hurricane lies undisturbed and dead, and living trees are matted together with gigantic creepers and tangled with undergrowth; they are like a well-trimmed plantation. 4. *It is expected to grow.* A plantation in poor soil on a bleak hillside may be slow to thrive, and one on a hot sandy plain may even perish in drought. But healthy well-placed plants should grow from saplings till they become great trees.

II. THE CHURCH IS A PLANTATION OF RENOWN. 1. There is renown *in the planting*

of it. It is customary for a member of the royal family who visits a country place to be asked to plant a tree. If the request is complied with, the young tree is watched with peculiar care and ever after pointed out with interest. It is a plant of renown. Not only has the Church been planted by God; it has been planted at the cost of the sacrifice of Christ. This plantation has been watered with the blood of Christ. It has the renown of the great sacrifice of Divine love consummated on Calvary. 2. There is renown *in the history of it.* There are trees of historic interest. Such was the oak of Mamre, sacred to the memory of Abraham. Englishmen have found a romantic interest in King Charles's oak. Sherwood Forest is famous for Robin Hood and his merry men. The plantation of the Church has a very mixed history. The greatest trees are not always the most fruitful, and the greatest names in ecclesiastical history are not always those that deserve the highest honour. The public and official history of the Church is disgraced with many a deed of un-Christlike and worldly conduct. But the plantation as a whole, the general body of Christians, the quiet town and country congregations, have done a work of charity—enlightening, comforting, and saving—in all ages of Christendom. Here, rather than in her calendar of saints, the true renown of the Church is to be found, and this renown is the glory of Christ, whose body she is; so that her members must exclaim, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy Name be the glory." 3. There is renown *in the destiny of it.* The Church has a great future before it. It goes forward to realize a grand idea. It has to win such a name as it dares not wear as yet. But even now, as the army shares the renown of its captain, the Church is honoured in its Head, to whom God has given "a Name above every name."

Ver. 30.—*The presence of God.* I. GOD IS PECULIARLY PRESENT WITH HIS PEOPLE. We know that he is everywhere—on the desolate sea and the fair earth, in the high heavens and the dark regions of death (Ps. cxxxix.). Therefore if any would desire to escape from his presence, this is impossible. How, then, can God be said to be in an especial manner present with his people? Spiritual presence is spiritual manifestation. God is more fully present where he more completely manifests his power and grace. 1. He is present *in the hearts of his people.* He dwells in the contrite and humble spirit (Isa. lvii. 15). The Christian's body is a "temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. vi. 19). God comes into especially close contact with those who are reconciled to him, and who open their hearts to receive his Spirit. 2. He is present *in the lives of his people.* He shapes their lives with his providential guidance, and watches over them with tender care, warding off danger and supplying wants. Even when they forget him in the slumbers of the night and during the busy distractions of the day, he neither sleeps nor neglects his people. Ever with them to guide and help and save, as he was with Israel in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, God overshadows and surrounds his people with his fostering presence.

II. GOD'S PEOPLE MAY RECOGNIZE HIS PRESENCE. The verse which suggests these reflections is somewhat like a frequent expression in the prophecies of Ezekiel. After denunciations of wrath and judgment against the heathen nations, the conclusion repeatedly arrived at is, "And they shall know that I am the Lord" (*e.g.* ch. xxx. 25). In these cases the awful action of God in his wrath is to bring home to the heathen the fact of his existence and supremacy; but it is not said that they will know that God is with them. To Israel, however, this new thing is asserted. Israel will not merely know that God is the eternal Lord; she will know that God is present. This further knowledge belongs to Christians. They are not merely theists, who believe in the existence of God; they know his actual, living presence. It is not suggested that this knowledge is to be obtained by direct, mystical intuition; it is rather suggested that it is gathered from the experience of God's goodness. Hagar recognized the presence of God when the angel addressed her (Gen. xvi. 13). Jacob perceived it on awakening from his dream (Gen. xxviii. 16). The later Jews were to see it in their restoration from the Captivity. We are to acknowledge it in the experience of the Christian redemption. In this Christ will manifest himself to us as he does not unto the world (John xiv. 21, 22).

III. THE RECOGNITION OF GOD'S PRESENCE IS ACCOMPANIED BY THAT OF HIS OWNERSHIP OF HIS PEOPLE. "And that they, even the house of Israel, are my people." God

is present with his people as their Owner. He comes to them to claim them. He visits his inheritance to take possession of it. When we perceive that God is with us we have to go further and acknowledge his relationship to us. It is much to acknowledge that we do not belong to ourselves, that we are God's possession, bought with a great price, and valued by him as precious property is valued by its owner.

Ver. 31.—*God's flock.* Israel was formerly God's flock. Christians are now God's flock.

I. CHRISTIANS ARE CONSTITUTED INTO A FLOCK. The wandering sheep are restored. They no longer roam at large over the mountains. They are gathered together. Man is naturally gregarious. Religion should deepen this characteristic by destroying selfishness and quickening the great social instinct, love. Thus Christ founded the Church idea. He recognized that he had many sheep that were not of the *fold* of Israel, or of his first community of disciples, and he prayed that they might all become one *flock*, even if they might not all be gathered into one *fold*. It may be impossible to restore the external unity of Christendom. At all events, this grand consummation seems at present to be far off, and some of those who profess to desire it most fervently do their worst to postpone it by their narrowness, bigotry, and self-assertion. Certainly, if the dream is ever realized, it will not be by all sections of Christendom succumbing to the views and practices of any one party, but by a general agreement within large lines of liberty. Meanwhile, though we may not have one fold, we should be one flock. There should be a spirit of brotherhood among all Christians. The boundaries of folds do not convert sheep into wolves. The spiritual unity of Christendom may be accomplished in the spirit of charity and sympathy taking possession of the hearts of all Christians.

II. CHRISTIANS ARE TENDED AS A FLOCK. The flock is under the care of a shepherd. God has "set up one Shepherd over" his flock (ver. 23)—Christ, who cares for his sheep to the extent of giving his life for them. The flock of Christ is variously tended. 1. It is *fed*. God has not left his people in the wilderness, or, if they must traverse that barren region, he sends heavenly manna and gives water from the rock. 2. It is *sheltered*. The shepherd watches over the flock by night and drives off beasts of prey. Christ guards his people from harm and danger. 3. It is *led*. The shepherd leads his sheep by the still waters, and ultimately home to their fold. God led his people Israel "like a flock" (Ps. lxxvii. 20), till they had passed all the perils of the forty years' wandering, crossed the Jordan, and taken possession of the promised land. Christ leads his people through life safely on towards the heavenly Canaan.

III. CHRISTIANS SHOULD BEHAVE AS A FLOCK, 1. They should *follow the Shepherd*. Christianity is walking in the footsteps of Christ (John xii. 26). We cannot expect the grace of Christ if we wander from him. 2. The flock is *the property of its Owner*; it exists for his advantage. It is not to be supposed that we are to receive countless blessings and render no return in obedience. The supreme end of the Church is the glory of God, though this is attained in conjunction with its own highest welfare. 3. The sheep are *foolish, weak, helpless creatures*. The Shepherd is far greater than they. He deserves to be looked up to with trust, and followed obediently. In our ignorance, folly, and weakness we should trust and obey our good Shepherd, who is wiser and stronger than we, and whose will is supreme over our lives.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—10.—*The human shepherds of the flock.* It is a comparison as old, yes, older than literature, this of the people to a flock of sheep, and of their rulers, leaders, and spiritual instructors to the shepherds whose vocation it is to protect, care for, and feed them. Both in the Old and New Testament Scriptures we meet with passages in which unfaithful, careless, selfish, and grasping religious teachers and leaders are denounced as hirelings who have nothing of the true shepherd's heart—no watchfulness, commiseration, and self-sacrifice. In the time of Ezekiel there were those who, called to be pastors and reputed to be pastors, were nevertheless destitute of the pastoral character and habits.

I. THEIR CONDUCT. This is very graphically and (after Ezekiel's manner) with outspoken plainness described in these verses. 1. The shepherds' neglect of the flock. They neither feed them upon suitable pastures, nor strengthen the weak, nor heal the sickly, nor recover the lost, nor deliver the defenceless sheep from the wild beasts of the field. On the contrary, they treat them with violence and with rigour. 2. The shepherds' care for themselves. They use the flock merely for their own pleasure and advantage, eating of the flesh of the sheep, and clothing themselves with their wool. 3. The consequent condition of the flock. Neglected by their custodians, they are scattered, they wander upon every high hill, they fall a prey to the beasts of the field. In all these respects there is a parallel between the conduct of careless, hireling shepherds and the conduct of those in Israel who claimed to be the spiritual pastors of the people. These, whether priests or prophets by profession, simply used their position as a means towards their personal wealth, ease, pleasure, and aggrandizement. And no wonder that the sons of Israel, so neglected by those who should have made their highest welfare their care, were abandoned to every enemy, and sank into a state of degeneration, debasement, and hopelessness.

II. THEIR CONDEMNATION. That such flagrant neglect of duty could not pass unnoticed and unpunished may be presumed by the least thoughtful. Under the rule of a Governor of infinite justice, those placed in a position of eminence and of influence, if they neglect to fulfil the duties of their position, must surely be called to an exact account of their trust. The prophet tells us concerning the unfaithful shepherds that: 1. God is against them. He, whose help and countenance would have been vouchsafed had they honestly and earnestly set themselves to do the work which they professed to undertake, now sets himself against the unfaithful. 2. They are held responsible for the flock. "I will require," says God, "my sheep at their hand." 3. The custody of the flock is taken away from them. And at the same time, they are prevented from any more feeding themselves. It cannot be that the flock should be punished for wandering, and that the careless shepherds, through whose neglect they wandered, should be suffered to go free.—T.

Vers. 11—16.—*The Divine Shepherd of the flock.* What a marvellous contrast is here presented between the hireling and unfaithful shepherds who have presumptuously undertaken the care of God's people, and the Lord God, who in his condescension assumes the pastoral office, and fulfils it with Divine qualifications and completeness! According to the beautiful and touching representation of this passage—

I. THE LORD SEEKS HIS SHEEP WHEN LOST. They have gone astray, through wilfulness on their part and through negligence on the part of the pretended shepherds. But the Divine Shepherd seeks and saves that which was lost, and, distant though they be, and in dangerous places, finds them out and lays his gracious hand upon them.

II. THE LORD DELIVERS HIS SHEEP FROM THE POWER OF THEIR ENEMIES. They have their enemies, and they have fallen into their enemies' hands. From such peril One only can save; and the Lord rescues them and, in the exercise of his pity and his power, sets them free from bondage and oppression.

III. THE LORD RESTORES THEM TO THE FOLD OF SAFETY AND OF PEACE. Even as Jehovah brought back the exiles from the East into the land of their fathers, so does the good Shepherd and Bishop of souls ever restore the penitent and believing to the welcome of his gracious heart, and to the fellowship of his rejoicing Church, to go no more out.

IV. THE LORD FEEDS THEM IN THE PASTURES OF HIS GRACE. The language of this passage is upon this point very full, rich, and reassuring. The good Shepherd declares, "I will feed them upon the mountains of Israel, by the water-courses; I will feed them upon good pasture, and on fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel." We may understand by this all the provision which the wisdom and loving-kindness of God have made for the wants and the welfare of his redeemed—the truth of his Word, the blessings of his sacraments, the fellowship of his saints.

V. THE LORD HEALS THEM FROM ALL THEIR WEAKNESSES AND SUFFERINGS. "I will bind up that which was broken, and strengthen that which was sick." He healeth all our diseases. His hand applies the remedy, administers the medicine, restores the broken health of the soul. No necessity is uncared for; no ill fails to meet his sym-

pathy; no weakly, tender lamb of his flock shall perish through neglect. "He shall gather the lambs in his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that give suck."

APPLICATION. These representations of Divine pity and tenderness are amply fulfilled in the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In his own discourses he set forth his mission under the similitude of the faithful, devoted shepherd. He laid down his life for the sheep. The apostles felt the justice and the beauty of the similitude. And upon the early Christians generally it made a profound impression; in their works of art they delighted to picture Jesus as the good shepherd.—T.

Vers. 23, 24.—*A pastor and a prince.* Christians cannot fail to recognize the Messianic reference of this portion of prophecy. The language employed not only exactly depicts him who is "Immanuel, God with us;" it is so exalted that it is not possible to refer it to any inferior being, to any under-shepherd of the flock, any overseer and ruler in the Church subject to human infirmities and failings.

I. THE SOLE SUPREMACY OF CHRIST OVER THE FLOCK. The "one Shepherd," God's "servant David," who can this be but Christ? For he is the Head of the new humanity, who has made both one. "There shall be one flock and one Shepherd." This is no other than the one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus.

II. THE SACRIFICIAL DEATH OF CHRIST FOR HIS FLOCK. Christ's people are a purchased possession; he laid down his life for the sheep. Thus he proved his love; thus he accomplished the gracious purposes of his Father; thus he effected the deliverance of his ransomed ones from the power of the enemy. All that the Saviour does for his people is comprehended in and follows from his identification of himself with them in his incarnation and sacrifice.

III. THE PERPETUAL SWAY OF CHRIST OVER HIS FLOCK. God's servant is appointed to be, not only the pastor, but the prince, of the redeemed. His rule is marked by justice and equity, and at the same time by benignity and compassion. He is the Prince of righteousness and the Prince of peace. His dominion shall be universal—"from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." His dominion shall be imperishable—from one generation to another, "and of the increase of his government there shall be no end."

APPLICATION. These representations of Christ summon all the members of his flock to accept with gratitude his pastoral provision and care; and to submit with cheerfulness to his just and gracious rule.—T.

Ver. 26.—*The promise of blessing.* By general consent this promise is referred to the time of the new covenant, to the coming of Christ for man's salvation, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church.

I. FERTILIZING SHOWERS OF BLESSING. As the rain waters the earth, and turns barrenness into fruitfulness, so the provision of Divine grace transforms this humanity from a wilderness of sin into a Paradise of God. 1. The *need* of such blessing is apparent from the spiritual barrenness which prevails where it is not bestowed. 2. The *source* of such blessing is implied in this language; for as the showers come from the clouds of the sky, so the Spirit descends from the presence, the heaven of God. 3. The *time* of such blessing is indicated as appointed by supreme wisdom; the shower comes "in its season," and the promise of the Father was given in the Father's good time. 4. The *abundance* of such blessing. God's spiritual favours come to his people, not in drops, but in showers, such as are fitted to refresh the parched and thirsty land. 5. The *effects* of such blessing are life and fertility. The wilderness and the solitary place are made glad, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. Spiritual growth and fruit are the blessed result of showers of Divine mercy.

II. ABIDING SCENES OF BENEDICTION. By the "hill" of God must be understood the Church of God, which he ever visits, refreshes, and vivifies by the dews and showers of his pity and loving-kindness. The Church, because the object of Divine favour and the depository of Divine truth and power, becomes and remains the agent of untold benefits to the world around. It receives blessing from heaven; it communicates blessing to earth. The heaven above is never as brass intercepting and restraining blessing; it is as the clouds distilling and diffusing blessing. And the rills are

never dry which convey the blessing of God from the Church to fertilize a thirsty and barren world.—T.

Vers. 27, 28.—*The peace and welfare of the Church.* So much of this book of prophecy is occupied with denunciation and with pictures of destruction and desolation, that a passage like this is grateful and welcome, as a relief and contrast to much of what has gone before. The prophet was evidently inspired to look into the far future, and to see visions of happiness and of glory which exalted and delighted his spirit. He was taught that the God of infinite compassion has counsels of salvation for sinful men, and plans of felicity for the ransomed Church. Some of the elements of blessedness, assured by God's faithfulness and mercy to his people, are pictured in these beautiful and encouraging verses.

I. PROSPERITY, SECURED BY THE VISITATION OF GOD'S MERCY AND LOVING-KINDNESS. This is figuratively represented by the promise, "The tree of the field shall yield its fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase." The Church is a garden, a vineyard, a forest; when it flourishes, it puts forth signs of vigorous life, and it is fruitful abundantly. The vitality of the Church expresses itself in its praises, thankgivings, and prayers, in its unity and brotherly love, in its deeds of justice and purity, in its benevolent and self-denying efforts for the good of the world.

II. DELIVERANCE AND LIBERTY, SECURED BY THE INTERPOSITION OF GOD'S MIGHT. The Lord "broke the bars of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hands of those who made bondmen of them." "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." It is his office to set God's people free from thraldom to error and to sin, and to make them God's freedmen, to introduce them into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. The promise must have had a special significance and sweetness for those who, like Ezekiel and his companions, were captives and exiles in a foreign land, and subject to the authority of strangers. Its spiritual meaning is comprehended and appreciated by all Christ's ransomed ones who are set free, his banished ones for whose return he has devised effectual means.

III. SECURITY THROUGH GOD'S PROTECTION. In a less settled state of society than our own, the literal meaning of the promise must have been peculiarly welcome: "They shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beasts of the field devour them; but they shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid." The Church of Christ is secure as the fold of God's flock, the fortress of God's warriors, the home of God's children. The powers of earth and of hell are strong, but the power of Heaven is mightier, and this power is pledged for the guardianship and safety of the people of Christ. The power of Divine providence controls all outward events. The power of the Divine Spirit within checks every rising fear. "Fear not," says the Almighty Guardian and Helper, "fear not: I am with you!"—T.

Vers. 1—16.—*God's verdict upon self-serving rulers.* The disasters that overtook the land and the people of Israel were largely due to the misdeeds of their rulers. The people in olden time were more easily led by their sovereign than they are now. The ability to read, combined with the free use of printed literature, has stimulated the power to think, and this has led to self-reliance, independence, and freedom. But in Ezekiel's day a dearth of literature made the people largely dependent on priests and rulers. The self-will of Rehoboam was the initial downward step to civic strife and national ruin. Rehoboam and his successors never learned the lesson that a ruler is a shepherd, that he is entrusted with the welfare of a nation, that he is appointed to live for the people, and not to expect that the people shall live for him. This is a wholesome lesson for all kings and magistrates. They are expected to care for every interest in the commonwealth.

I. GOD'S ESTIMATE OF A RULER'S DUTY. A ruler, whether supreme or subordinate, is required by God to act as a shepherd. He is ordained to this office (at least theoretically) on the ground of superior knowledge, skill, and fitness to govern. God's intention is that the personal endowments of one shall be employed for the welfare of the many. The design in erecting the kingly office is not that everything in the state shall contribute to the pomp and magnificence of the king, but contrariwise, that the king shall devote his talents and energies to the well-being of his weakest subjects.

The public health must be his care. Measures for alleviating and uprooting disease must originate at the palace. The education of the young, the development of mental resources, the dissemination of all useful knowledge, form part of the monarch's duty. The sanitation of the people's dwellings is a more royal service than leading battalions on the battle-field. Whatever increases mutual concord, industry, virtue, wealth, morality, and religion demands the king's attention. And what is true respecting a king is true (in its measure) respecting every meaner magistrate and officer of state. Every man who fills an office of rule is a shepherd, under obligation to safeguard the interests of the people. Such is the doctrine taught by God.

II. GOD'S RECOGNITION OF A RULER'S SELF-AGGRANDIZEMENT. Every occupant of a throne acts in the stead of God. He is a delegate of the Most High. Therefore it is his duty to imitate the rule of God—to act as God acts. Inasmuch as God cares equally for all the members in his family, for the obscure and the weak, as well as for the rich and the strong, it becomes earthly monarchs to do likewise. Every neglect of the well-being of subjects is noted down by God. The cry of the oppressed toilers enters the ears of the Lord of hosts. In God's esteem kingly condescension is a nobler quality than animal courage. It is better every way to enlarge a people's virtue than to enlarge the boundaries of empire. God notes down carefully each royal delinquency.

III. GOD'S MODES OF CHASTISING A RULER'S CONTUMACY. 1. *Removal from office.* "I will cause them to cease from feeding the flock." Defeat upon the battle-field, dethronement, loss of regal power, early death,—*these* are among the modes of chastisement God employs. So many are the plans for vindicating himself which are available to him, that he seldom employs the same mode of chastisement in two separate instances. What are often deemed common disasters are forthputtings of the chastising rod. 2. *Arraignment at the bar of God.* "I will require my flock at their hand." Kings, as well as private persons, must give a faithful account of life. Kings are usually here the objects of envy; but when we include in our survey the eternal future, envy may well cease. Every place of honour is a place of responsibility. Kings may recognize on earth no superior authority, yet they too are under law, and must in due time "give an account of their stewardship." The day of audit draws on apace.

IV. GOD'S INTERPOSITION FOR THE NEGLECTED FLOCK. "I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out." The political and imperial events of Asia in Ezekiel's day were dominated by the superior will of Jehovah, and the political events of every empire are under the same jurisdiction. All valuable reward comes from the favour of God; all real punishment is from his hand. 1. *Return from exile is promised.* They shall dwell in their own land. Every man has naturally an attachment to the land of his fathers, and removal means weakness and loss to the social fabric. Under God's rule this banishment shall be reversed. 2. *Prosperity is pledged.* "I will feed them in a good pasture." Agriculture shall again prosper under the ægis of righteous government. Security of person and property is the vital breath of industry. Fields and gardens shall smile with beauty under the sunshine of Divine favour. 3. *Perfect protection is assured.* "I will cause them to lie down." No harsh noise of invasion shall disturb them. They shall be far removed from all disquietude beneath Jehovah's wing. Their munitions of granite are the words of the Omnipotent. The power that supports the heavens is their defence. 4. *Gracious care of the suffering is announced.* This was a new thing in Ezekiel's day. In such stormy times the weak and diseased were counted a burden. This conduct is emphatically God-like. For God takes a special pleasure in conveying sympathy and succour to his suffering ones. "In all their affliction he is afflicted." 5. *Here is intimation also of moral recovery for the lost and the guilty.* "I will seek that which was lost." He who cares for men's temporal interests cares infinitely more for their soul's health and joy. The gladness that rolls through heaven when a sinner turns is gladness that originates with God. He delights to reclaim a wayward lamb. His patience and tenderness are most of all conspicuous in dealing with rebels. His greatness hath made many great.—D.

Vers. 17—22.—*Social oppressions.* The wisest men detect only some of the evils that blemish a nation; they are blind to more secret delinquencies. The Almighty Ruler detects every hidden iniquity, nor will he spare any form of sin.

I. OBSERVE THE CONTAGION OF WICKEDNESS. The first part of the chapter reveals

God's judgment upon evil rulers. *Now* is brought to light the wrong-doing of men in private and unofficial stations. The sins of pride and violence soon filter down from magnates to merchants, from princes to peasants. Vice is more contagious than any bodily disease we are familiar with. As children easily learn to imitate the words and ways of parents, so men in inferior stations copy the deeds of those immediately above them. As thistle-down bears an abundant crop of seed, so do also most kinds of sin.

II. MARK THE EVIL AND BITTER FRUITS OF SELFISHNESS. Selfishness is the prolific mother of a thousand sins. In a ruler selfishness becomes as a scourge of scorpions to the people, and makes the man a monster; in a private person it works a world of minor mischiefs. In any form it is a malignant and despicable thing. As night casts its black shadow over every scene of natural beauty, so selfishness blights and disfigures every relationship between man and man. 1. *Here are acts of malevolence.* The rich and the strong cared only for themselves. Self-aggrandizement in them had grown into ill will for their neighbours. National calamity, which ought to have brought them nearer to each other for mutual help, had generated a malevolent temper. 2. *This ill will led to acts of wanton destructiveness.* Such portions of agricultural produce as they could not use themselves they destroyed, so that their poorer neighbours might be reduced to yet direr straits. Never was the fable of the dog in the manger more literally realized. Landlords who destroy cottages in order to drive out the poor from the parish, walk in these men's shoes. 3. *Acts of personal cruelty.* "They pushed the diseased with their horns until they had scattered them." The horns were weapons provided by God for their defence against their foes, and it was a strange abuse of God's kindness to use these weapons for the injury of their suffering fellows. Every form of disease is a mute, pathetic appeal to our better nature for sympathy and help. We do ourselves a lasting injury when we refuse assistance. We turn the natural milk of human kindness into gall. Men are members of one social organism; and in injuring each other they injure themselves. The culture of benevolence is a primary duty—a fountain of joy. 4. *Self-blindness.* To these self-indulgent men "it seemed a small thing" to treat their weaker and suffering brethren thus. Yet it was a very mountain of wickedness. A selfish eye looks through the wrong end of the telescope, and sees real objects greatly minimized. By-and-by their eyes will be opened. By-and-by the mist of appearances will vanish, and all human actions will be revealed in naked reality.

III. RIGHTEOUS DISCRIMINATION AND AWARD ARE NOT FAR AWAY. "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle." Probably many of these rich blustering men complained bitterly enough of the selfish violence of their rulers, and never surmised that they were committing the very same sin under another guise. They saw the mote in others' eyes, yet did not suspect that a beam filled their own eye. But an unseen Judge was there, and weighed in the balance of perfect equity every deed and word of man. It is a consolation to the suffering that deliverance from the highest source will come, and will come at the best possible moment. The great Refiner sits by and watches the refining process in the furnace. His plans to us are full of mystery, for our vision is very limited, while he sees the end from the beginning. His eye skilfully discriminates between every form and every degree of human offence. Men will not be judged (as they are often now) in classes, but as individuals. Some Canaanites will be accepted; some Israelites will be rejected. Some Pharisees shall find their way to heaven; some publicans will perish. A rich man may be saved in spite of the encumbrance of riches; some poor men will be outcasts eternally because destitute of faith and love. The balance of God is an even balance, and in his presence the smallest deception is impossible.—D.

Vers. 23—31.—*The golden age of peace.* Predictions of Divine retribution, added to bitter experience of misfortune, had well-nigh filled the souls of the people with despair. And despair is a critical condition for man. It may lead to self-abandonment, to the wildest excesses of vice and devilry. Will God make no interposition on their behalf? Must their only prospect be midnight, unrelieved by a single star? No! over the black cloud God again flings the bow of gracious promise. Black midnight shall be followed by a roseate dawn. The old order shall give place to a new. A nobler kingdom shall be set up.

I. A NEW KING. He is described as "my servant David." This description is not to be accepted literally, but symbolically. The people could not understand the magnificent purpose of God by any other language. As God stoops to our infantile state by describing heaven to us in language borrowed from earth, so did he portray the era of Messiah's reign by language borrowed from the most prosperous events in their past career. Despite all his failings, David had been their most illustrious sovereign. His reign had brought them prosperity and honour and great enlargement. They shall have another David—a better David. In reality, as well as in name, he shall be the "Beloved," even "the Man after God's own heart." God shall make the appointment, therefore questions touching its wisdom may well be silenced. The King of their King is God, therefore the new Monarch shall be a true Shepherd, viz. one who will care more for the flock than for himself. The spirit of his reign shall be love.

II. A NEW CHARTER OF INCORPORATION. "I will make them a covenant of peace." For centuries past they had tasted the horrors and the misery of war. Civil strife and foreign invasion had made the beauteous land a desolation. War between man and man had been incessant, because the whole nation was at war with God. The influence, the virtue, the spirit of the new King were designed to spread until they had permeated the whole nation. Love to God would produce benevolence to each other. Further, it was an act of incomparable condescension on the part of God to make such a covenant with men, particularly with such rebellious men. For a covenant is a contract which brings obligation on both parties entering into it, and which deprives them of a portion of their liberty. So, in amazing kindness to men, and that he may lift them up, God freely brings himself under obligation, and gives to undeserving men a right they did not before possess. This gracious covenant embraced the most precious interests of the true Israel, and was appointed as a root of prosperity and joy. And the conclusion of the covenant was guaranteed. "I," said God, "I will make" it. Hence it included the solution of men's opposition. It deals with men in their internal nature as well as in their outward conduct. Divine love will gradually melt all hostility, and will fertilize human nature with heavenly grace. "They shall be my people."

III. A NEW ERA OF PROSPERITY. A long catalogue of beneficial effects are specified. 1. *Civic concord.* "I will cause the evil beasts to cease." By evil beasts we may properly understand unprincipled and oppressive men. A gracious influence shall touch and remodel the characters of men. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid." Instead of an instinct to injure, there shall be an instinct to benefit each other. 2. *Personal security.* "They shall dwell safely even in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods." The security shall be perfect. The former haunts of robbers shall become the abodes of peace. The very deserts shall resound with the merry laughter of children and with the songs of honest swains. 3. *Agricultural fertility.* "The tree of the field shall yield its fruit, and the land shall yield her increase." Often in the olden time they sowed a bushel and reaped a peck; but this resulted from God's displeasure. Now crops shall be prolific. The barren hills shall smile with the olive and the vine. The valleys shall be robed with russet corn. The table of every cottager shall be laden with plenty. 4. *Seasonable communications of good.* "I will cause the shower to come down in its season." As in most lands rain is essential to fertility, so in Messiah's kingdom the descent of spiritual influence is essential to a fruitful piety. The windows of heaven shall in due season open, and plentifully irrigate the souls of suppliants. Out of the inexhaustible storehouse a gracious supply shall come. 5. *Unprecedented blessing shall be given.* "I will raise up for them a plantation of renown." This seems to indicate some useful product of a most beneficent kind—"a plantation" remarkable, and that shall bring them high renown. Without question, gifts and graces have been bestowed upon men in this gospel age unheard of in former years; and richer donations of grace are yet in store. 6. *Honour.* For long and dreary centuries they had borne the reproach of the heathen. They had been the tools of rival kings—the laughing-stock of the Gentiles. *Now* this shall be reversed. In proportion to the depth of their dishonour shall be the height of their exaltation. Not false and meretricious honour shall they have, but that true honour which is the fruit of righteousness. 7. *Intimate friendship with God.*

Their knowledge of God shall be deep and experimental. They shall have something better than theoretical and speculative knowledge. They shall have the full assurance that God is among them. They shall feel that God has a proprietorship in them, and that they have a proprietorship in God. God is *their* God. "The house of Israel are my people, saith the Lord God." This is supreme joy, the beginning of heaven, when God dwells in us and we dwell in God. The union is organic, inseparable.—D.

Vers. 1—10.—*The use and the abuse of office.* It is generally agreed that by the shepherd of the text we are to understand primarily the kings and princes of Israel, who should have guarded and nourished the people of Israel with the devotedness with which David (see ver. 23) once tended his people; but the interpretation need not exclude the "ecclesiastical" officers of the land, those whose practice was to teach and warn the people—priest and Levite and prophet. These strong words of correction will apply to all those, of every time and country, who hold office and undertake public trust. We gather—

I. THAT WE SHOULD ACCEPT OFFICE WITH A DEEP SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY. The Hebrew king held office under God; so also did priest and prophet. And so do we. 1. It is in the providence of God that we are led to take our position, whatever it may be. 2. It is God who has given us the capacity and the advantages which have fitted us for the post we occupy. 3. We are sacredly bound to do everything in every sphere "unto him" and for the glory of his Name. So that the deepest desire as well as the uppermost purpose of our mind should be to do all things which devolve upon us as in his eye, to his approval, in accordance with his expressed will, after the manner and in the spirit of Christ.

II. THAT WE SHOULD HOLD OFFICE WITH A DISTINCT VIEW TO FAITHFUL SERVICE. Not—How shall we please? or, How shall we rise? but, *How can we serve?* or, How useful can we prove to be? should be the question on our lips because in our minds. The special opportunities presented to us must necessarily depend on the particular post we hold. But, whether it partake of a more secular or of a more sacred character, it is not unlikely that it will embrace the opportunity of: 1. Strengthening those that are weak (ver. 4); offering a helping hand or cheering voice to those that are less skilful or less experienced than ourselves. 2. Restoring those that have failed or fallen (ver. 4); going to those that have made a mistake, or that may have committed that which is worse than a mistake, and enabling them to regain the confidence and the hope which they have lost. 3. Enlightening those who have not been taught or trained; "feeding" them (ver. 2). 4. Sustaining in comfort, in wisdom, in hope, in gladness of heart, in usefulness, those who are walking in their integrity. These services especially apply to the Christian minister; it is his sacred function, his welcome opportunity, in a peculiar sense, to do all this in the spirit of holy, happy service; thus following in the footsteps of the good Shepherd himself.

III. THAT SELFISH NEGLIGENCE IN OFFICE WILL DRAW DOWN THE DIVINE DISPLEASURE. God's high displeasure is revealed against the kings and princes of Israel, who only sought their own honour and enrichment (see vers. 2, 7—10). And those who profess to teach and to guide in the name of his Son, the chief Shepherd of the Church, and who use their office not to feed, or guard, or save the flock, but to care for their own comfort and seek their own pleasure,—how shall they escape the judgment of God (see ch. xxxiii. 1—8)! On the other hand, we may confidently reckon—

IV. THAT THE DEVOTEDNESS OF LOVE WILL MEET WITH A LARGE REWARD. They who seek the wandering, who strengthen the weak, who sustain the whole and healthful in their integrity; they who pray earnestly, and watch vigilantly, and work diligently, and, when the hour comes, strike manfully, shall in no wise lose their reward.—C.

Vers. 11, 12.—*God's interest in men.* We learn of the interest God takes in us that he is—

I. UNAFFECTED BY OUR SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS. The great ones of the land regarded those who were at the bottom of society as beneath their consideration. What mattered it if they lived in privation and in ignorance, so long as the royal palace, so long as the costly castle, was well furnished? But this distinction between the worth

of men on the ground of social rank or of circumstance finds no place at all in the mind and heart of God. He cares for men *as they are*; possessed as they are with a nature that is capable of great things—great sufferings, sorrows, degradation, iniquities, on the one hand, and great joys, hopes, nobilities, achievements, on the other hand. Not where we stand or what we hold, but what we are and what we may become, is the Divine consideration.

II. DRAWN TOWARDS THE NEGLECTED. It is the guilty neglect of the flock by the selfish shepherds that drives the sheep to the notice of the Divine Shepherd, and that draws out his pitiful pastoral affection (vers. 8—11). And we may infer that the neglected, because they are such, are the objects of the Divine sympathy. The *neglected* child in the home, member of the Church, pupil in the school, student or toiler in the world of art and industry, citizen in social circle or the broader sphere of the nation, is the object of the pitiful regard of One who never overlooks, who understands how that heart feels which is wounded by the disregard of men, who "lifteth up the meek," who "hath respect unto the lowly."

III. CONCERNED FOR THE LOST AND SCATTERED. Those who are far away from Zion and from all its sacred and hallowing influences are still "my sheep" (ver. 11); and the strain of the twelfth verse is one of tender sympathy and earnest solicitude for those who "in the day of clouds and thick darkness" have been "scattered on the wild." We have wandered away from the home of the Father; some of us into a very "far country;" it may be that of almost entire forgetfulness; or of an utter shameless indifference; or of a deliberate disobedience of his known will; or of an absolute denial of his existence; or of a wanton endeavour to corrupt and destroy the character of his children. And yet, however far we have gone astray, in all the emptiness and spiritual poverty of our distance from home, in all our misery and aching of heart, in all our hopelessness, our Divine Father follows us and pities us; his heart is filled with a parental solicitude for us.

> "For though deceived and led astray,
> We've travelled far and wandered long,
> Our God hath seen us all the way,
> And all the turns that led us wrong."

IV. ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN THEIR REDEMPTION. "I will seek out my sheep, and deliver them." 1. The restoration of the exiled Jews may be one part of the fulfilment of this promise. 2. The coming of the Son of man "to seek and to save that which was lost" was a later and better fulfilment. And we find a further, a perpetual Divine redemption of this ancient word of promise in: 3. The putting forth by the Church of Christ of all its redeeming energies. Whenever and however any one that, filled with the spirit of his Saviour, seeks to raise the fallen, to bring back to truth and piety those that have gone away in the darkness, to heal the stricken and suffering spirit and to enrobe it with "the garment of praise," there God is himself "searching out his sheep," and "delivering them from the places whither they have wandered." How excellent is the portion of those who are his agents in this gracious work!—C.

Ver. 14.—*The mountain-height of Israel—moral and spiritual elevation.* "I will feed them "upon the mountains of the height of Israel" (literally, see Revised Version; see also ch. xvii. 23 and xx. 40); *i.e.* upon the mountain-height of Israel; and the reference is to—

I. THE EXCELLENCY OF ISRAEL IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. The neglected and scattered sheep that had been untaught or misdirected by their rulers should be cared for by the Lord himself; they should be placed on the very summit of sacred privilege, they should be sheep feeding on the mountain-heights of the Holy Land. Mount Zion was "*the* holy mountain" (ch. xx. 40), where the best spiritual pasture was to be had for the hungering heart of the devout Hebrew; but "everything in Israel had a moral elevation." At any rate, Israel in its best days, under David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Uzziah, Hezekiah, Josiah, attained to an elevation of knowledge and of character which was comparatively great and high. Its superiority to all surrounding nations was seen in: 1. *Its knowledge of the living God.* While they were worshipping gods of their own creation—false, capricious, cruel, lustful—the people of God were honour-

ing One who was just, holy, kind, true, faithful; one who was worthy the deepest reverence, the fullest trust, the strongest affection that the human soul could offer; One whose service constituted the most lofty enjoyment and exerted the most elevating influence on the minds and lives of his worshippers. 2. *Its morality.* There are many passages in Scripture condemning immoralities among the Jews, and there were periods when Hebrew morality declined. In the time of our Lord it had sunk with the sinking of religion into formality and routine. Yet an historical comparison between the *morale* of the Jewish nation and that of all contemporary peoples would show that the children of Israel, in any period of their history, towered high and far above their neighbours. Comparatively speaking, they were true, and pure, and temperate, and just. To be taught and trained as was the Hebrew child in his home and in his school and in the sanctuary of God, was to ascend and to move along the "mountain-height of Israel." The very best and the saintliest men of Israel, whose names are held in highest honour by the good and pure of every land, were the mountain-peaks that did not rise straight and lonely from the deep valleys; they rose from the high elevation, the mountain-ranges of general national piety and purity. The idea is far more perfectly realized, and the prophecy finds its complete fulfilment in—

II. THE HIGHER EXCELLENCY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. Here we stand on loftier ground. We have: 1. A still loftier conception of *the character and the will of God.* Learning of Jesus Christ, knowing God as revealed to us in him, we recognize a Divine Father, grieved with his children's sin and departure from himself; yearning over them in their distance and their misery; seeking at his own infinite cost to save them; engaged through the centuries in the gracious and glorious work of redeeming the human race to holiness and happiness, to the kingdom of heaven. 2. *A still higher morality.* Sitting at the feet of the great Teacher, following in the steps of the Divine Exemplar, restrained and constrained by the influences of the Holy Spirit of God, we rise to and walk along the lofty mountain-range of Christian morals, breathing a Christian atmosphere, engaged with our Lord and Leader in his great work of grace and truth. With Christ's own truth in our mind, with his example before our eyes, with his Spirit willing to dwell within and to inspire all that seek his presence and his power, (1) how utterly unworthy of us is everything small and mean in feeling and in action! (2) how it becomes us to take a high and noble course, to speak in an elevated strain, to breath a pure and bracing air, to do lofty and magnanimous deeds, as we move up the mountain-path to the heavenly places!—C.

Vers. 17—22.—*The sinfulness of selfishness.* It was not only the shepherds, but some of the sheep, of "the rams and the he-goats," that were injuring and robbing the sheep. It was not only the kings and the princes, but the strong and wealthy among the people of Israel, that were disturbing and distressing the land. It is not only those "who have the rule over" the Churches of Christ, but some of the fellow-members, who have to be corrected, and whose conduct needs to be transformed. Ezekiel's vision was that of a flock of sheep seeking nourishment "in the green pastures and by the still waters" of Israel; but instead of each one taking its turn and making room for its fellow, he saw the strong ones eating and drinking themselves, and befouling the grass and the water for those who came after, or else pushing violently at the weaker ones and driving them away, "scattering them abroad" to pine and to perish, for anything they cared. A painful picture of a selfish society, each man struggling for himself, and "the weaker going to the wall." How utterly unlike should this scene be to any community that claims to be Christian! And yet shall we venture to say that there are *no* societies that bear that name, and that write themselves among the number of the good, to whose condition this prophet's picture bears a sad resemblance? Do we not see in countries and communities where nothing like this should be seen, a selfish scramble, a disregard for the claims and the necessities of others, a cruel indifference to the wants of the weaker, a willingness and an eagerness, and indeed a determined struggle, to be well pastured and well watered, however many there may be that are perishing for lack of food and shelter? We may well dwell upon—

I. ITS UNLOVELINESS. Even to the eye of the loving and tender-hearted man such unrelieved selfishness is offensive; it is unsightly and repellent in a high degree. How

utterly unbeautiful must it, then, seem in the sight of him who is Love itself! Surely it is one of those things which he is "of purer eyes than to behold," which he "cannot look upon" save with profound aversion.

II. ITS HEARTLESSNESS AND DEMORALIZING EFFECT UPON THE AGENTS OF IT. It argues a pitiful inconsiderateness of other people's need, a guilty indifference to the wants and sufferings of other souls. And such cruel carelessness as this is not only a great and sad evil in itself, a sin and a wrong in itself; it is a hardening, mischief-working course. It indurates the soul, and leads down to such an immoral condition that at last a man's own personal comfort and enlargement are everything to him, and the wants and woes of his brethren and sisters nothing.

III. ITS UTTER UN-CHRISTLIKENESS. Can anything be more painfully and completely unlike the spirit and the conduct of Jesus Christ than a selfish struggle for the first place, let who will go hungry and thirsty and be driven away? Anything more diametrically opposed to the spirit and contrary to the will of that "Son of man who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many," it would be difficult to discover.

IV. ITS CONDEMNATION AND ITS DOOM. "I will judge between the fat cattle and the lean" (ver. 20). The day will come when we shall give account of the use we have made of our power. And if then it be found that we have used our horns (ver. 21) to thrust aside our brother from the good he was seeking, in order that we might enjoy it; that we have *not* used our power to help the needy, to strengthen the weak, to give drink unto the thirsty, to raise them that are bowed down, we may expect the language of condemnation from the Judge of quick and dead (see Matt. xxv. 41—46).—C.

Vers. 23, 24.—*One greater than David.* Certainly this prophecy finds its fulfilment in the coming of the Messiah. He was to be the "great Shepherd," the "chief Shepherd," the "good Shepherd" of the sheep. He was to be to the people of God all, and very much more than all, that David had been in his time. We have thus before us the persons and the work of David and of his "greater Son." The Son of David excelled his human prototype in—

I. THE GOOD PLEASURE HE GAVE TO THE FATHER. David was a man of God's own choice, was "the man after his own heart." But there were times when God's pleasure in him was withdrawn; one time when "the thing that David had done *displeased* the Lord," and that in no slight degree. But there never was an hour in the life of Jesus Christ when he was not the "beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased."

II. THE COMPLETENESS OF HIS CHARACTER. David's character, all things considered, was a very fine one; he was a man we can admire. He was brave, generous, affectionate, devout; he loved the people over whom he reigned, and strove to serve them well. But there were grave defects in his character, showing themselves occasionally in serious mistakes or positive transgressions. But the David of Ezekiel's prophecy was One whose character lacked nothing whatever. Each one of his attributes was complemented and completed by its opposite—gentleness by holiness, sensitiveness by firmness, piety by activity, etc. Once, as it has been well said, and only once, the plant of our humanity bore a perfect flower, and that was when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. In him all the elements that go to make up an absolutely perfect human character met and blended. He was the Son of man, "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." "He was holy, harmless, undefiled;" "and in him was no sin;" "in his mouth no guile was found."

III. THE GREAT WORK HE WROUGHT. David did a very good work. He welded the twelve tribes of Israel into one strong nation; he defeated and drove away his country's enemies; he extended the borders of the land and made Jerusalem a praise and Judah a power in the earth; he bound the people in strong bonds to the worship and service of Jehovah; he wrought for the intelligence and the morality of the people. That was much; but a large part of it was soon undone by unwise or unworthy successors; the kingdom he formed and strengthened was soon cleft in twain, and before very long it was dissolved. How incomparably greater is the work that Jesus wrought! 1. He spoke that truth concerning God and man and human life

and character which the world will always want to learn. 2. He lived that life of love and purity, of blamelessness and beauty, of piety and sweetness, in which the world will always find its one faultless instance. 3. He endured those sorrows and died that death which constitute the world's redemption. 4. He left behind him a message of mercy, an invitation to eternal life which is the world's great hope and heritage. It is in his gospel that the real fulfilment of the prophet's promises are to be found (vers. 25—30).

IV. HIS PERSONAL RELATION TO MANKIND. David is a very interesting historical character, whose life we like to study; and we are thankful for the privilege of reading and singing his imperishable psalms. But Jesus Christ, apart from the truth he spoke and the example he left us, is *himself* the Divine Saviour in whom we trust, the Divine Friend we love, the Divine Lord we live to serve.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Ver. 1.—Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying. As no date is given, the present oracle, extending to the close of ch. xxxvi. 15, may be assumed to have been communicated to and delivered by the prophet in immediate succession to the foregoing, with which it has also an intimate connection. Having announced the future restoration of Israel, as Jehovah's flock, to her own land under the leadership of Jehovah's servant David, who should feed them like a shepherd and rule them like a prince (ch. xxxiv. 13, 23, 24), the prophet proceeds to contemplate the existing hindrance to this return in the occupation of Palestine by the Edomites, who had probably been allowed by the Chaldeans to take possession of it in payment of services rendered by them against Judah in the siege of Jerusalem—to predict the entire removal of this hindrance (vers. 1—15), and to administer to Israel the comfort which, as a consequence, would ensue (ch. xxxvi. 1—15).

Ver. 2.—**Set thy face against Mount Seir.** The mountainous region between the Dead Sea and the Elanitic Gulf, which formed the original settlement of Esau and his descendants (Gen. xxxvi. 9), is here put for the land of Edom, as the land in turn stands for its people (ch. xxv. 8). Although already the prophet has pronounced a threatening doom against Edom (ch. xxv. 12—14), he once more directs against it the judgments of Heaven, on this occasion viewing it as the representative of all those hostile world-powers which from the first had been opposed to Israel as the theocratic nation, and which even then, by their antagonism, hindered her return (cf. Isa. lxiii. 1—8).

Ver. 3.—**Behold, O Mount Seir, I am against thee** (cf. ch. v. 8; xiii. 8; and contrast ch. xxxvi. 9), **and I will stretch out mine hand against thee** (cf. ch. vi. 14; xiv. 9, 13; xxv. 7, 13; and Exod. vii. 5), **and I will make thee most desolate;** literally, *a desolation and an astonishment* (cf. ver. 7). Against the mountains of Israel had been denounced a similar fate, which the idolatrous remnant that lingered in the land after the Captivity had commenced began to experience (ch. xxxiii. 28, 29). The doom, however, connected with the day of Israel's return was to fall upon Edom, whose cities should be emptied of their inhabitants and whose fields should be cursed with barrenness (ch. xxv. 13; Obad. 8, 10).

Ver. 4.—**They shall know that I am Jehovah.** By this expressive formula Ezekiel intimates the moral effect which should be produced upon the nations of the earth, whether by beholding or by experiencing the Divine judgments (ch. vi. 7, 13; vii. 4, 9; xi. 10, 12; xiii. 9, 14, 21, 23; xiv. 8; xv. 7, *et passim*; cf. Exod. vi. 7; vii. 5, 17; xxix. 46; xxxi. 13; all of which passages belong to Wellhausen's *grundschrift*, which it is supposed had no existence in the time of Ezekiel).

Ver. 5.—**Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred;** literally, *hatred of old*, or eternal enmity (cf. ch. xxv. 15). This was the first of the two specific grounds upon which Edom should feel the stroke of Divine vengeance. Edom had been Israel's hereditary foe from the days of Esau and Jacob (Gen. xxv. 22, *sqq.*; and xxvii. 37) downwards. Inspired with unappeasable wrath (Amos i. 11), during the period of the wandering he had refused Israel, "his brother," a passage through his territory (Numb. xx. 14—21; Judg. xi. 17), and in the days of Jehoshaphat had combined with Ammon and Moab to invade Judah (2 Chron. xx. 10, 11; cf. Ps. lxxxiii. 1—8). His relentless antipathy to Israel culminated, according to Ezekiel (cf. Obad. 13), in the last days of Jerusalem, in the time of her calamity, when Nebuchadnezzar's armies encompassed her walls, in the time

that her iniquity had an end; or, *in the time of the iniquity of the end* (Revised Version); meaning, according to Keil, "the time of Judah's final transgression;" or, according to Dr. Currey, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' the time when the capture of the city put an end to her iniquity; but, with more probability, according to Hengstenberg, Plumptre, and others, the time of that iniquity which brought on her end (comp. ch. xxi. 29). Ewald translates, "at the time of her extremest punishment," taking *avon* in the sense of punishment—a rendering the Revisers have placed in the margin. Then, according to Obadiah (vers. 11—14), the Edomites had not only stood coolly by, but malevolently exulted when they beheld Jerusalem besieged by the Babylonian warriors; and not only joined with the foreign invaders in the sacking of the city, but occupied its gates and guarded the roads leading into the country, so as to prevent the escape of any of the wretched inhabitants, and even hewed down with the sword such fugitives as they were not able to save alive and deliver up to captivity. To this Ezekiel refers when he accuses Edom of having shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword; literally, of having *poured the children of Israel upon the hands of the sword;* i.e. of having delivered them up to the sword (cf. Ps. lxiii. 11; Jer. xviii. 21).

Ver. 6.—**I will prepare thee unto blood.** This peculiar expression was probably selected because of the suggestion of the name *Edom* ("red") contained in the term *dam* ("blood")—though Smend doubts this—and designed to intimate that Edom's name would eventually be verified in Edom's fate. **And blood shall pursue thee.** "As blood-guiltiness invariably pursues a murderer, cries for vengeance, and delivers him up to punishment" (Hävernick), so should blood follow in the steps of Edom. The translation of Ewald, who reads תַּעֲקֹךְ instead of אֶעֱקֹךְ, "And because thy inclination is after blood, therefore blood shall pursue thee," is hardly an improvement, and is besides unnecessary. **Sith thou hast not hated blood.** So render Ewald, Keil, Kliefoth, Hävernick, Schröder, Plumptre, and the Revised Version, meaning that Edom had loved bloodshed. Kimchi, Hitzig, Hengstenberg, Smend, and Fairbairn regard אִם־לֹא as a particle of strong affirmation, equivalent to "forsooth," "verily," and understand the prophet to say that Edom *had* hated blood. As to the precise import of this rendering, diversity of sentiment prevails. Some, with Theodoret, explain "blood" as an allusion to the blood-relationship of Esau and Jacob, Edom and Israel, and hold the charge to be that Edom had hated his "brother" Israel. Others, with Hengstenberg, take the blood Edom hated to be the blood he had shed. Hitzig and Fairbairn suppose the sense to be that Edom hated the idea of his own blood being shed. **Even**—better, *therefore* (Revised Version)—**blood shall pursue thee.** A parallel to this expression is supplied by Deut. xxviii. 22, 45. According to the first or commonly accepted exposition of the preceding clause, the sense is that Edom would ultimately fall beneath the great law of retribution, and reap as she had sown—blood for blood; according to the second, the allusion is to the fact that what Edom now most dreaded, the shedding of his own blood, would be that which should ultimately overtake him (cf. ch. xi. 8; Job iii. 25).

Ver. 7.—**Thus will I make Mount Seir most desolate;** literally, *desolation and a desolation* (שְׁמָמָה וּשְׁמָמָה); or, as in the Revised Version, *an astonishment and a desolation;* changing שְׁמָמָה into מָשָׁמָּה, for which, however, there is no sufficient warrant. **And I will cut off . . . him that passeth out** (or, *through*) **and him that returneth.** No more should traders or travellers pass through the land of Edom or go to and return from it (cf. ch. xxxiii. 28; Zech. vii. 14; ix. 8, 10).

Ver. 8.—**And I will fill his mountains with his slain;** literally, *pierced through;* hence mortally wounded. Then Edom's desolation would result from an exterminating war, which should fill its **hills, valleys,** and **rivers,** or rather, *water-courses,* with slaughtered men (cf. ch. xxxi. 12; xxxii. 5). The physical features of Edom here specified by the prophet have often been attested by travellers. "Idumea embraces a section of a broad mountain range, extending in breadth from the valley of the Arabah to the desert plateau of Arabia. . . . The ravines which intersect these sandstone mountains are very remarkable. Take them as a whole, there is nothing like them in the world, especially those near Petra. . . . The deep valleys and the little terraces along the mountain-sides, and the broad downs upon their summits, are covered with rich soil, in which trees, shrubs, and flowers grow luxuriantly" (Porter, in Kitto's 'Cyclopædia,' art. "Idumea").

Ver. 9.—**Thy cities shall not return,** as in ch. xvi. 55 (Authorized Version after the Keri); or, *shall not be inhabited,* as in ch. xxvi. 20; xxix. 11; xxxvi. 33 (LXX. and Revised Version, both of which follow the Chethib). Hengstenberg's translation, "Thy cities shall not sit," but lie prostrate, is not extremely happy.

Ver. 10.—**Because thou hast said.** The second ground of Edom's punishment lay in this, that she had presumptuously as well as confidently exclaimed, not concerning Idumea and Judah, as Jerome conjectured, but concerning Israel and Judah when she saw them stripped of their inhabitants, **These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it**; "it" meaning either the region over which the two countries extended, or, as Schröder suggests, Jerusalem their common capital (see ch. xxxvi. 2; and comp. Ps. lxxxiii. 4—12). And what constituted the gravamen of Edom's offence was that she had so spoken, **whereas** (or, *though*) **the Lord was there.** It is not necessary, with the LXX. and Kliefoth, to read "is there," to guard against the supposition that Ezekiel designed to suggest that, though Jehovah had formerly been in the land, he was there no longer. But, in point of fact, Jehovah had for a time withdrawn his visible presence from the temple and the city (see ch. x. 18; xi. 22, 23), though he had by no means renounced his right to the land; and Edom's error lay in not regarding this, but in acting as if Jehovah had departed from Israel for ever (Hävernick); or (better, "and") in thinking he could appropriate to himself what really belonged to Jehovah, viz. the territory out of which Israel and Judah had been cast (Hengstenberg).

Vers. 11—13.—**I will make myself known among them**—Israel and Judah; not *to thee* (LXX., Hitzig, Ewald)—**when I have judged thee.** Edom's wickedness should be requited by his being made to suffer the indignities he designed to heap on Israel. In him the *lex talionis* should have full sway. Edom's misconception as to Jehovah's relation to the land and people should be corrected when Jehovah should rise up in judgment against him. Those judgments should in the first instance be a revelation to Israel and Judah, who should discern therefrom that they had not been utterly abandoned by Jehovah (ver. 11; cf. ch. xx. 5); and in the second instance should open Edom's eyes to perceive that Jehovah had been a silent listener to all the blasphemies she had uttered against the mountains of Israel (ver. 12), and had reckoned these as blasphemies uttered against himself (ver. 13).

Ver. 14.—**When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate.** By "the whole earth," Fairbairn, Hävernick, and Schröder understand "the whole land of Edom." In this case the sense is that, as the whole land of Edom had previously exulted with joy, so should it in the future be made completely desolate. Ewald, Hengstenberg, Keil, Kliefoth, Smend, and Plumptre, however, more correctly interpret the phrase as signifying the whole human race, with the exception of Edom. Accordingly, the thought seems to be, not that of Ewald and Smend, that Jehovah would make Edom's devastation a sport or comedy (*freudespiel*) to the whole world; or that of Kliefoth and Hitzig, that God would make Edom desolate, whilst all the earth rejoiced over her downfall; but that of Keil, Plumptre, and others, that just as Jehovah was preparing for the whole earth of redeemed humanity a glorious future of joy, so certainly would Edom and all whom Edom represented be excluded from participation in that joy.

Ver. 15.—**As thou didst rejoice.** כְּ is here a particle of comparison; and the import of the passage is that precisely as Edom exulted over the desolation of Israel's inheritance, so would Jehovah cause others to rejoice over the downfall and desolation of Edom. **All Idumea.** Instead of this Greek term, the Revised Version properly substitutes the usual word *Edom*. Note: That the prediction here uttered concerning Edom received literal fulfilment, the following extract relative to the present state of the country will show: "Idumea, once so rich in flocks, so strong in its fortresses and rock-hewn cities, so extensive in its commercial relations, so renowned for the architectural splendour of its palaces, is now a deserted and desolate wilderness. Its whole population is contained in some three or four miserable villages. No merchant would now dare to enter its borders; its highways are untrodden, its cities are all in ruins" (J. L. Porter, in Kitto's 'Cyclopædia,' art. "Idumea").

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*The desolation of Mount Seir.* I. AN AFTER-THOUGHT OF JUDGMENT. This is a distressing and disappointing passage. We seemed to have done with the weary recital of successive judgments against the several heathen nations. Passing from these painful scenes, we had come to the cheerful picture of the restoration of Israel. Now that picture is rudely torn, and a description of the desolation of Mount Seir inserted in the midst of it. The darkness of this unexpected scene of judgment is the more appalling inasmuch as it is in startling contrast with the preceding and

the succeeding brightness of Israel's restoration. This looks like an after-thought of judgment. It is as though Edom, the nation typified by Mount Seir, had been forgotten until suddenly, by an unlucky chance, she came into mind, and then without delay the thread of joyous prophecy is broken and her doom is ruthlessly pronounced. At all events, the solitary and peculiar position of the prophecy against Edom gives to it a striking significance. 1. *No impenitent sinners can be always overlooked.* There are no exceptions to the law of retribution. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," is a principle of universal application. No single soul can by any rare good fortune ultimately escape from it. 2. *God's forbearance does not destroy his justice.* He may wait long. But if the soul is finally impenitent, he will surely smite. 3. *The goodness of God does not abolish his wrath against sin.* Even when the mercy is most fully displayed, this wrath is also seen.

II. THE DOOM OF THOSE WHO ARE NOT FAR FROM THE KINGDOM. There was one reason why Edom should receive exceptional treatment. She was not only a near neighbour to Israel, she was a blood-relation. Her people were the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob. Though a foreign nation, her cousinly relationship with Israel was like that of America with England. She could reckon two—the two best—of the patriarchs as her ancestors. Like Israel, she was descended from Abraham and Isaac. Might not she, then, expect the blessings of the patriarchs? Esau had begged for a blessing with bitter tears, and he had received one, but not the best blessing (Gen. xxvii. 38—40). The young man whom Christ loved was "not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark xii. 34). Yet for all we know, he did not enter it. The members of Christians families are favoured with great religious privileges. It is much to be able to claim godly ancestors. But these advantages will not serve as substitutes for personal piety. Nay, they will make the guilt of godlessness the greater. We may be like Edom, very near to Israel, yet like Edom we may be cast aside and lost, if we have not really entered ourselves into the Divine covenant.

III. THE PUNISHMENT OF HATRED. Edom was accused of "perpetual hatred" (ver. 5)—a hatred which perhaps sprang from original jealousy, still one that had been long cherished. As love is the fulfilling of the Law, so hatred is the most effectual breaking of it. It is hatred that brings war and misery on mankind. This is constituted out of the very venom of hell. It cannot be allowed to remain unchecked. If it is not abandoned and repented of, its curses must come home to roost, and they who harbour it must suffer its doom. So long as a man cherishes hatred in his heart towards a single fellow-creature, he cannot be accepted by God (1 John iv. 20).

Ver. 5.—*The end of iniquity.* I. INIQUITY MUST HAVE AN END. God will not permit it to run on for ever unchecked and unpunished. The sinner has a long leash, but it is not interminable. God steps in at length and puts a stop to the awful succession of wicked deeds. Wicked cities and nations have had their end. So must it be with sinful lives.

II. THE NATURAL END OF INIQUITY IS DEATH. Sin is the great destroyer. It is a raging fire which will ultimately fade away into dull ashes by consuming all the fuel on which it feeds. The sinner is a suicide. His evil is a slow but sure poison, that eats out the very fibre of his soul. This awful fate does not come on with a sudden shock so that men can be roused by its approach. It is like a creeping paralysis, and its insidious advent is least readily recognized by the very persons in whose experience it is taking place.

III. INIQUITY MAY HAVE AN END IN REPENTANCE. There is an alternative. We are not bound to let the sin run through all its fatal course to the final silence and desolation. We must end the sin or it will end us; but the former may be done. The warnings of the fatal consequences of sin are set before us for the express purpose of urging us to cast off the deadly thing before it has completed its awful work.

IV. CHRIST HAS COME TO PUT AN END TO INIQUITY. He works in common with the fundamental moral law in regard to the ending of sin. No lawgiver could be more stern in the denunciation of sin than the gracious Saviour. He gave it no quarter. From the first he declared himself its deadly enemy. He came "to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8). There is no shadow of excuse for the notion that we can find in Christ a shelter from the rigorous requirements of morality, so that we

need not be so strictly righteous if we are Christians, as we should need to be if we were not. Christ expects a higher righteousness than that of the Law (Matt. v. 20). But when we perceive that our sin is our utter undoing, we are prepared to welcome Christ as our Saviour from this chiefly.

V. IT IS WELL TO CONSIDER THE END OF INIQUITY. It has not yet arrived. All is now calm and apparently prosperous. We may say that there is time enough to consider the evil day. But the end may come before we expect it. Its slow and gradual approach leads to our failing to perceive how near it may be. Then the nearer it is the more difficult is it for us to draw back. The descent becomes more steep as it approaches the precipice; the rapids grow swifter as they near the falls; the poison more effectually pervades the system as death comes on. The longer we postpone repentance, the harder it is to repent. But apart from such thoughts of warning, sin that leads to so awful an issue should be accounted hateful in itself. Its present vile character is revealed by its end. With such fruit the plant must be odious.

Ver. 10.—*A miscalculation.* Edom had taken for granted that she, in conjunction with the allied nations, no doubt, would be able to seize the territories of Israel and Judah. She had calculated her resources and matched her strength against those of her foes. But she had forgotton one essential element in the reckoning—she had failed to take any account of the presence of God. This was a fatal blunder, and it upset the whole scheme. It is very common for people to discuss their prospects with the same mistake in their minds. Worldly reasoning that ignores God is not only irreligious; it is false and foolish. Irreligious thought is bad logic.

I. A SELFISH GREED. Edom covets the fair and fruitful land of Israel. This is the common spirit of national plunder. It is the spirit of the veiled warfare of commerce. Men and nations hunger after their neighbours' property. All selfish persons are robbers at heart, though many are restrained by prudential considerations from carrying out their evil desires. Now, the prevalence of this selfish greed gives a very ugly look to the world, and suggests the thought that the weak must be the prey of the strong. It is only when we can look above the scramble for wealth that we can discern the play of higher influences on man's history and destiny.

II. A NARROW VIEW. Edom sees the weakness of Israel clearly enough; and she makes no mistake in estimating the strength of herself and her allies. But she confines her view to these local and earthly facts. Here is the limitation of all worldliness. Men of the world are keen and clear-headed. They see distinctly their points of advantage, and seize them quickly. But their gaze is confined to earthly things. Thus worldliness is essentially low and narrow. It has a sharp vision, but it is very short-sighted. There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in its philosophy.

III. A DIVINE FACT. "The Lord was there." This was a fact, although Edom knew nothing of it, just as God was at Bethel before Jacob recognized his presence. 1. *God is in human affairs.* It is not simply asserted that God interfered from a distance. He was present. Palestine was a God-haunted land. The difference between Israel and Edom was not merely racial or geographical. It was chiefly this—that God manifested his presence to the one people as he did not to the other. 2. *God takes an active part in the world.* God was not merely in Palestine as a spectator. He was present to act. Edom's error was in not recognizing a real influence. It is like that of the naturalist who dissects a brain to discover the secret of thought, but takes no account of the mind that once inhabited the brain. God is now present actively in the world, not in Palestine especially, but (1) in Christendom when men acknowledge him and make themselves open to his influence; and also (2) among all men in his great providential government.

IV. A NEEDED CORRECTION. The Divine element must be introduced if the miscalculation is to be corrected. This will make a surprising difference to Edom's reckoning. So it will in individual affairs. The oppressing Pharaoh did not reckon on God's power to save Israel; the rich fool counted up his wealth, but forgot that his life was in God's hand (Luke xii. 16—21). Life and death are more dependent on heavenly influences than most men suppose. We need a new order of reasoning, a fresh

arithmetic that shall not fail to give a large place to the influence of God on all things.

Ver. 13.—*Boasting against God.* Edom had ignored the presence of God (ver. 10). Now she has gone further, and boasted against God. This is a sign either of heathenish darkness that does not know God, or of wilful rebellion that proudly rises up against him, or of both.

I. THE BOAST OF IGNORANCE. Men who forget God boast themselves: 1. *In thought.* Man looks very big when God is left out of sight. The hill is a grand sight to one who has not seen an Alp. The worship of humanity proceeds on the assumption of the non-existence of Divinity. If, indeed, there be no God, man may be the loftiest existence; in that case, he may stand on the very topmost pinnacle of being. 2. *In practice.* The same condition will be reflected in practical life when a man ignores the influence of God on his affairs. He feels himself the master of the situation. By science and art he can subdue nature. His powers and opportunities have given him a free hand among his fellow-men. Why, then, should he not dream great dreams and imagine himself to be a very monarch of life? The glorying of irreligion in a successful man seems to be perfectly natural, nay, inevitable.

II. THE BOAST OF OPPOSITION. Edom boasts herself against God. In heathenish ignorance she supposes herself to be stronger than the God of Israel. At all events, she sets herself up in opposition to Jehovah. It is customary for contending powers, when going to war, to keep their courage up by boasting of their own strength and despising that of their enemy. The same is seen in man's great warfare against God. 1. *In intelligence.* People act as though they supposed they could outwit God. Though they do not draw out the thought into a clear argument—when it would certainly break down in a great fallacy—they tacitly assume that they are clever enough to elude the consequences of their sins. Other people may blunder into ruin, but they will steer their craft so deftly that, though it runs down the rapids, it will not go over the falls. 2. *In will.* The stubborn rebellion of man's will asserts itself in opposition to the wise, holy, strong will of God. Men think in their strong-headed sin that they can force their way against the will of God. Because for the time being they have a free hand, they imagine that it will always be so. Now, it certainly does appear that man could assert his self-will in wildest opposition to God. The mistake is in judging of the future issue by present appearances.

III. THE FATAL BOAST. Boasting against God cannot succeed. If there be a God, he must be supreme. He may be too magnanimous to hurl his rebellious creature to sudden destruction. He may even regard the sinful boasting with compassion on account of its helpless folly. But he certainly will not let it ultimately triumph. Boasting is not victory. Boasting does not create strength. It is only "with the mouth"—a mere matter of empty sound. But facts are not changed by words. All the oratory of boasting that was ever practised will not dissolve one of the hard, stern realities of life. God is still God, though men ignore his presence and resist his will. Therefore to boast against God is fatal to the boaster. He is like one who dashes his head against a wall. He only destroys himself by his vain pretence. Our safety lies in humility, contrition, and submission to our God and Father.

Ver. 14.—*Desolate in the midst of general joyfulness.* I. THERE IS TO BE A SEASON OF GENERAL JOYFULNESS. "When the whole earth rejoiceth"—that is a glimpse of a wonderful future. At present the earth mourns and languishes. Tyranny oppresses nations of slaves. Penury holds multitudes in weary drudgery on the verge of starvation. War devastates fields and towns and countries. Sorrow sighs from the heart of humanity. But this shall not continue for ever. 1. *There will be joy in a glorious future.* The Bible is full of hope. Its golden age always lies before us, not behind us. 2. *This joy will be attained through the gospel of Christ.* The angels sang for joy at his birth on earth. Gladness comes to the heart in which he is revealed afresh. When the old earth is subject to the rule of Christ, and the sin that is its curse is blotted out, a new Divine joy must take possession of men. 3. *This joy will be for the whole earth.* At first, only a remnant is to be saved (Rom. ix. 27). But this remnant does not represent the whole harvest of Divine salvation. It is but the firstfruits. The gospel

is for the wide world. All the nations are to enter into the heritage of the future. Christ "shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa. liii. 11). No scanty salvage from the huge wreck of humanity could satisfy the great soul of Jesus.

II. IT IS POSSIBLE FOR ANY ONE TO BE EXCLUDED FROM THIS GENERAL JOYFULNESS. Edom is to be shut out when the whole earth rejoices. 1. *The joy of the whole earth is the joy of its several inhabitants.* The sheet of sunshine that lies broadly over meadow and hillside is woven out of innumerable rays of light. The flood of music that fills the valley with melody consists in a succession of distinct notes. The blaze of colour that flashes on us in the summer garden comes from the several hues of separate flowers. The general joy is the joy of many hearts. Each must share it individually if all are to display it collectively. 2. *The individual participation in the general joy depends on an individual condition of receptiveness.* It is supremely the joy of reconciliation. Now, Christ died to make atonement for the whole world. Yet each soul has to be separately reconciled to God. And when the old rebellion of man against God is virtually quelled, if but a single soul held out, that soul must be excluded from the joy which comes in with the great peace.

III. IT IS UNSPEAKABLY DREADFUL TO BE DESOLATE AMIDST GENERAL JOYFULNESS. 1. *The perception of contrast is intensely distressing.* The one heavy heart is in painful contrast to the many light hearts. Sorrowful people shun merry gatherings, shrinking from them as people with pained eyes shrink from bright lights. It is an acute grief to the desolate soul to be alone in a joyous festivity when all others are of one mind. For a lost soul to be placed in the midst of the blessedness of heaven would be far worse than the torments of hell. 2. *The discovery of needless failure is especially grievous.* The rejoicing is practically universal. Why, then, should one poor soul be excluded? Nearly all are in when the door is shut, but one miserable creature is left out in the darkness. If salvation were only intended for a few, the many might learn to acquiesce in their dismal lot. But when a man sees that it is intended for the whole world, and yet by his own folly he is excluded, he must torture himself with bitter regrets.

Ver. 15.—*Rejoicing over the ruin of others.* I. THE UGLY FACT. Edom had rejoiced over the ruin of Israel. One would say that such a joy must be impossible. Regarding the world from the high ground of ideal speculation, one would suppose that sympathy for the suffering must spring forth as a natural instinct, or that, if the feelings were callous and selfishness hardened the heart, still there would be no room for joy under such circumstances. But the facts of history and observation show that Edom's joy was no monstrous, impossible experience. People do rejoice in the sufferings of others: 1. *In national life.* The downfall of rival nations is accepted by their more fortunate neighbours with delight. 2. *In amusement.* The old, fierce delights of the amphitheatre, which delicate ladies shared with bloodthirsty warriors, were just the joys of cruelty, pleasures got directly out of the sufferings of fellow-creatures. The Emperor Domitian is said to have taken a keen interest in watching the contortions of agony on the face of a dying gladiator. A similar spirit lurks in the present-day popular taste for amusements that involve great risk of life. A Christian spirit should discourage such amusements as feeding on cruelty. 3. *In private life.* Some people seem to take a spiteful pleasure in the disgrace and ruin of their neighbours. Is not this pleasure at the root of much idle gossip and fascinating scandal?

II. ITS EVIL CAUSES. How comes it that the misery of one man can cause pleasure to his brother, when by the influence of sympathy it should produce an opposite effect? The causes of this gross perversion of the appetite for pleasure are various: 1. *Revenge.* Israel had been an old enemy of Edom. The commonest pleasure of cruelty is in seeing a foe humiliated. There may be natural elements in this feeling: (1) a reaction from the tension of fear; and (2) a satisfaction of the desire for self-protection. Still, the joy is evil and hateful, for it exceeds self-regarding considerations, and it excludes pity; it denies the duty of loving our enemies. 2. *Envy.* Edom had formerly envied the prosperity of Israel. She afterwards rejoiced in her rival's downfall. This, again, is a sort of reaction from the pain of envy. It is the more powerful if the successful rival has shown scorn for her less fortunate neighbour. Now, the scorn is reversed. 3. *A sense of contrast.* Sitting at ease, the spectator compares his comforts with the agonies before him, and as all feeling arises from contrasted states, the sharpness of this

contrast heightens the relish of a man's present comfort. This is brutally selfish. 4. *Malignity.* There does seem to be a direct pleasure in seeing others suffer. This is the glee of devils. It may be shared by diabolical men.

III. ITS FATAL EFFECTS. Edom is to be punished and made desolate. God will certainly punish cruelty as a great sin, because it is the direct opposite of man's first duty, which is to love all beings. The evil joy will work mischief in the heart of the man who cherishes it. It is a venom that will rankle in the breast that engenders it. We need love and sympathy for our own soul's health. The pleasures of cruelty cut a man off from the bonds of fellowship, even with those who are not themselves its victims, because they destroy the elements on which the spirit of brotherhood lives. Thus a cruel person is inwardly lonely. Selfishness makes the heart desolate. The exclusion of love is the exclusion of the greatest joy of human fellowship. In seeking his own pleasure the man who admits evil passions of revenge or spite into his breast darkens his life with the gloom of spiritual solitude. On the other hand, the deepest joy is found in sacrificing one's self in order to save one's brother.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 5, 6.—"*Lex talionis.*" Ezekiel returns to his prophecy regarding the inhabitants of Mount Seir. These neighbours of the Israelites were animated by hostility to God's people which was of a peculiarly bitter character. The prophet's mind was deeply affected and sorely pained by the language and the actions of these enemies of Israel. This probably accounts for his reverting to his inspired threats of adversity and even destruction about to overtake these bitter and blasphemous foes of Israel and of Israel's God.

I. THE CHARGE BROUGHT AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF MOUNT SEIR. 1. The *offence.* They were guilty of violence against Israel and inexcusable bloodshed. A predatory and warlike race, they had turned their arms against their neighbours, instead of allowing them to dwell in security. 2. The *motive.* This was malice, malignity. A perpetual, unappeasable enmity actuated those of Mount Seir in their repeated incursions into the territory of the Israelites, and the desolation of the land and the destruction of life laid to their charge. Other more excusable motives accounted for the hostilities waged by other peoples; against Mount Seir the charge is brought of acting upon the meanest and basest of motives. 3. The *opportunity.* This was the time of Israel's calamity and weakness. They took advantage of the circumstances of their neighbours, and attacked them at a conjuncture when they were powerless to defend themselves.

II. THE RETRIBUTION WITH WHICH THE PEOPLE OF MOUNT SEIR WERE THREATENED. 1. The *Author* of this retribution was none other than the Lord God himself. He ruleth among the nations; "let not the rebellious exalt themselves." His justice is unquestionable and his power is irresistible. "He is terrible in his doings towards the children of men." 2. The *nature of it.* It is foretold that the cities shall be laid waste, and that the land shall be desolate, that the blood of the inhabitants of Mount Seir shall be shed. "I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee." 3. The *law* of it. Observe that the judgment and penalty here foretold is not simply retributive; it is of the nature of *retaliation.* The *lex talionis* prescribed "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," etc. The punishment matched the offence. Such a correspondence is noticeable between Seir's treatment of Israel and Jehovah's treatment of Seir. They had shed blood, and in recompense their blood should be shed. This is not to be regarded as private, personal revenge, which is forbidden to man, and could never be practised by a holy God. It is a public measure, a judicial act, a proceeding warranted by justice, and intended to produce a deep and wholesome impression upon all who should witness it. It certainly marks the heinousness of sin in the view of the righteous Ruler, and it exemplifies the inevitable and universal action of the retributive government of the God of nations.—T.

Vers. 11—15.—*The Lord's identification of himself with Israel.* A careless reader might possibly consider that a passage like this exemplifies prophetic partiality; that

Ezekiel, because himself a Jew by birth and by sentiment, was disposed to represent the Supreme as upon his side and against his countrymen's enemies; that the view given of the Eternal is of a Ruler whose government is distinguished by favouritism. But further consideration will show that this is not the case. The cause of Israel was the cause of monotheism in religion, of spirituality in worship, and of purity and righteousness in morals. It is true that the Hebrew people did not actually, as a matter of fact, attain the standard which as a nation they adopted; and for this reason their leaders and thinkers were at this very time enduring the purifying humiliation of the Captivity. But the highest interest and the fairest prospects of mankind were bound up with the preservation of Israel as God's witness concerning himself to the world, and as God's preparation for the advent of the Messiah.

I. THE INIQUITOUS CONDUCT OF SEIR. They were guilty: 1. Of anger and enmity against Israel. 2. Of evil speech, of blasphemy, against Israel. 3. Of rejoicing over the sorrows, calamities, and desolations of Israel.

II. THE LORD'S IDENTIFICATION OF HIMSELF WITH ISRAEL IN THE WRONG THEY SUSTAINED AT THE HAND OF SEIR. The fact is that Israel was his people, and he, Jehovah, was Israel's God. This is said with the recollection that Israel had transgressed his Law, rebelled against his authority, despised the privileges he had bestowed; with the recollection that their God had chastened them sorely, and at this very time was causing them to pass through the furnace of affliction. All this does not interfere with our belief of the close identification between the Lord and the sons of Jacob. It was not for their goodness, but for his purposes, that they were chosen. They were a consecrated nation, *i.e.* a nation set apart to fulfil a deliberate intention of the most high and holy God. Therefore, in a special manner, the Lord took the part of Israel, resented the wrongs done to them, the indignities put upon them, and the blasphemies uttered concerning them. Therefore the Lord avenged them of their adversaries. Other nations might be destroyed, but it did not consist with God's purposes that Israel should perish. He was against those who were against his people.

III. THE LORD'S AVENGING OF ISRAEL'S WRONGS AS DONE TO HIMSELF. 1. He heard with displeasure all the evil words uttered against those whom he had set apart for himself. 2. He judged with a righteous and severe judgment all who injured his servants. 3. For Mount Seir, as a flagrant offender, was reserved an especial punishment: "When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate." Let it be observed that this was a reversal of what had formerly taken place; for when Israel was desolated, Mount Seir had rejoiced.—T.

Vers. 1—15.—*Special punishment of special sin.* Very painful must it be to an intelligent spirit to be the executor of Jehovah's vengeance upon transgressors: the pain is only one remove the less to announce the coming doom. Yet, as we gain broader and clearer views of God's administration, we discover that the suffering of a few brings advantage to the many. The splendour and the rare excellence of God's righteousness are thereby clearly revealed. And gradually we perceive that pain and pleasure are matters vastly inferior to right and wrong. The well-being of heaven is suspended upon just government in the universe. Right must be done, though the stars should fall and the material fabric become a wreck.

I. AN AGGRAVATED NATIONAL OFFENCE. 1. *It sprang out of an ancient hatred.* The then-existent inhabitants of Israel had done the Edomites no wrong. It was simply an ember of an old fire the Edomites had fanned and kept alive generation after generation. Their duty clearly was to forgive and to forget. Centuries before, the blood-stained hatchet ought to have been buried. Heedlessly the Edomites were doing their own nature a cruel wrong. They were strangling their noblest qualities. 2. *Hatred, nursed, soon develops into murder.* "They had shed the blood of the children of Israel." Murder may stain the character of a state as much as it stains the character of an individual; and every war, unjustly provoked, is only murder. The lives of a myriad innocent men will be required at some tyrants' hands. And this murderous outrage was an act of basest cowardice. They had plunged the sword into Israel's breast when Israel was prostrate and wounded by other foes. It was as black a deed as ever had been done under the eye of the sun. 3. *Added to this was an attempted spoliation of Israel's territory.* "Because thou hast said, These two nations

. . . shall be mine." Edom had hoped to blot Israel's name completely out of history, and to embrace the sacred territory in the empire of Edom. Their hatred had hatched a purpose to murder and bury a nation—a nation that had been and might again be a blessing to the globe. And the guilt was equally as great as if the vile purpose had succeeded. To the eye of our righteous God there is often a vast volume of crime secreted in a single purpose, in a hidden motive. The quintessence of sin may be found there.

II. CRIME AGAINST A NATION IS SIN AGAINST GOD. 1. *God has identified himself with men.* This was conspicuous in a marked degree in the case of Israel. Yet this identification with Israel's true welfare is typical of God's fatherly interest in all trustful souls. More or less, God identifies himself with humanity; and no wrong to humanity shall go unpunished. He will champion the interests of the oppressed everywhere. 2. *God carefully notes every act of injustice.* "I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel." Every whisper of man is heard by God. Such acute hearing staggers our understanding. Yet "he that formed the ear, shall he not hear?" The secrets of imperial councils are all seen and heard by Jehovah. Ultimately, and in the best time, he baffles all wicked designs. 3. *Human folly in ignoring God's presence.* "Whereas the Lord was there." In every age worldly men concoct their plans as if no God ruled over the affairs of men. Ambitious rulers parcel out a neighbour's territory, totally unmindful that God is in possession. "The earth is the Lord's," and his eye is never absent from his property. The weakest child of man may always summon God to his side—his Helper and Friend.

III. EQUITABLE RETRIBUTION. 1. *Divine activity.* "I will stretch out mine hand." Hath God, then, a human hand? The language is an accommodation to the understanding of man. God has an adaptation of power more than equivalent to the dexterous strength of the human hand. His almighty hand can reach to the very extremities of the universe. As by a breath of the lips he can create, so by a breath can he desolate cities. 2. *Exact retribution.* "Sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee." No human judge has ever been able to mete out such exact penalties as God does. A combination of perfect qualities is needed, and this perfect combination no one possesses save Jehovah. It is always a real alleviation if the victim can feel that he has not deserved so much severity; and it is the very core of anguish to realize that the suffering is absolutely just. Conscience itself becomes the executioner of God. 3. *The penalty will be set in the light of contrast.* "When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate." It is a slight mitigation of suffering when others share it with us. It aggravates our suffering if all around us are bright with joy. The rich man of the parable felt his torment the keener because Lazarus was seen in the repose of blessedness. Isolation in misery is an additional element of woe. 4. *The desolation was to be final.* No prospect, not the most distant, could be entertained of relief. The stroke was to be, not disciplinary, but utterly penal. It was to be a perpetual desolation. The race was to suffer extirpation from the district. 5. *The edict was confirmed by an oath.* "As I live, saith the Lord God," this shall be done. This form of speech by God is a further accommodation to men. As an affirmation makes a deeper impression upon the minds of men when accompanied by an oath, by a solemn appeal to the presence of God, so God condescends to speak to men in such manner as shall most powerfully affect them. From God the simplest form of words is enough. "He is not a man, that he should lie." A word from him creates or destroys. But he speaks by way of oath, in order to arrest our thoughts and to convince our judgment. 6. *Conviction of God's jurisdiction often comes too late.* Men ignore God's presence and God's interference in human affairs, until events force upon them the fact that they are fighting, not simply against their fellows, nor contending against adverse circumstance, but are verily fighting against God. At length, out of the chaos of atheistic thoughts there looms the form and features of the living God. But the knowledge comes too late. They *know* God as their overpowering Foe, whereas they might have known him as a gracious Friend.—D.

Vers. 1—9, 14, 15.—*Features to be found in penalty.* When God is obliged to be "against" a man or a people, as he was against Edom (ver. 2), he (it) may look for these three things in the retribution which impends—

I. AN INFLICTION ANSWERING IN CHARACTER TO THE SIN. "Because thou hast given over . . . to the power of the sword . . . *therefore* . . . I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee" (vers. 5, 6). Our Lord also himself tells us that "they who take the sword shall perish with the sword." *Violence* shown to others commonly brings down violence on its own head. *Craft* and cunning lead men to great wariness, and even to a corresponding wiliness, in their dealing with the man who endeavours to undermine and to deceive. The man who is much engaged in digging pits for others is very likely to fall into one himself. *Miserliness* of spirit and behaviour always leads to a real impoverishment of soul, and often to an imaginary poverty of circumstance which, though imaginary, is real enough to the man's own mind. There is no one whom the penurious man deprives of so much good and joy as himself. Penalty always answers to wrong-doing in its character. They who sin in the flesh suffer in the flesh, and they who sin in the spirit suffer in the spirit. The man who sins against his family will suffer domestic trouble; he that does not respect himself wrongs himself grievously, if not fatally.

II. AN INFLICTION ANSWERING IN MEASURE TO THE SIN. The severity of Edom's punishment was to answer to the greatness of her crime. 1. Lasting enmity was to be visited with lasting desolation (see vers. 5, 9). 2. Because they had "hated blood," *i.e.* had shown such determined malice and cruel hatred towards their own relatives (Theodoret, Jerome, Michaelis), therefore "blood should pursue them;" violence should not only overtake and slay, but should *pursue* them, should continue to smite them. 3. "According to the joy of the whole land [of Edom], God would make it a desolation" (ver. 14; Fairbairn); as it did rejoice in Israel's fall, in like measure would it be the object of derision and of triumph "in the dark hour coming on." As its joy, so its desolation; the height of the one would measure the depth of the other. We cannot always prove that penalty answers in measure to the extent of the wrong that has been wrought; but we can very often see that it does, and we are quite sure that it does so when we cannot recognize the fact. The truth that much sorrow is not penalty at all but discipline and preparation for higher work and a larger life, and the further and deeper truth that a very large and most important part of penalty is found in inward experience and especially in spiritual deterioration, will explain many apparent exceptions to this rule. Fuller knowledge and profounder wisdom will bring their sufficient revelations in good time; meanwhile we may be perfectly assured of the fact that the further we wander from God, from truth, from righteousness, from love, the deeper is the brand that enters into our soul, and the sadder is the destiny we are weaving for ourselves.

III. THE CONSTANTLY RECURRING ELEMENT OF DESOLATION. As the word "desolate," or "desolation," is the prevailing note of this prophecy, and indeed of many others also, so may it be said that loss, diminution, destitution, ruin, is the constantly recurring evil which sin is working in the soul and in the life of men. They who forsake the God of their fathers and who seek their heritage not in his holy service but in material successes or in the lower affections and delights, will surely find that they are bereaving themselves of all that is best; that they are denuding their life of its highest worth, that they are going down, step by step—sometimes it is by very steep steps, too—to the condition which may be well described in the prophet's words as "a desolation and an astonishment" (ver. 3).—C.

Vers. 10—13.—*The supreme mistake.* The two striking and significant sentences in this passage are in the tenth and thirteenth verses: "And Jehovah was there" (ver. 10); "I have heard" (ver. 13). They bring out—

I. EDOM'S GREAT MISCALCULATION. No doubt Edom had its princes, its statesmen, its warriors, of whom it was proud, on whose sagacity and prowess it was leaning. But however astute her ministers may have been, they made one great and fatal mistake—they left out of the account one factor, the presence of which made *all* the difference to the issue. Under their false guidance Edom thought itself more than a match for Israel, which, with its pastoral and agricultural pursuits, was less warlike than itself. And Edom said to itself, "These two nations . . . shall be mine, and we will inherit it" (ver. 10). "And Jehovah was there," interjects the prophet, with burning indignation. Edom, forsooth, going to appropriate Israel, and swallow it up

as a dainty morsel, as if it had only to stretch out its hand and take it! "And Jehovah was there"—that One in whose presence all Edom, with all its civil and military power, was but the dust of the balance, was nothing and less than nothing and vanity; that Holy One who held Edom responsible for its enmity and its cruelty; that Mighty One at the breath of whose mouth all its proud soldiery would go down as saplings before the storm! What senseless infatuation! what infinite presumption! to remember and to covet Israel's well-watered meadows and well-cultivated fields, and to forget that "Jehovah was there"! to resolve to go up and possess its pleasant places, and occupy its strong cities, and plant its flag on Mount Zion without taking into the account that "Jehovah was there"! Edom was entertaining proud, ambitious schemes, and it was making "scornful speeches against the mountains of Israel, saying, A desolation, to us they are given for fire," and was thus "magnifying itself against" the Lord. But what depth of meaning, and what vigour of action, and what certainty of doom lies in those simple words of Jehovah, "I have heard"! Those disdainful words of theirs have entered the Divine ear, and they will move that mighty hand to its work of righteousness and judgment.

II. OUR OWN SUPREME MISTAKE. We never commit so great and so ruinous an error as when we leave out of our account the presence and the handiwork of God. We are never so utterly and so perilously in the wrong as when we lay our plans and make our speeches, forgetful that God is near us, overruling all we do, and hearing every word we speak. We make this supreme mistake: 1. When *we think we can sin without his banning.* If we lay our schemes to injure our brethren, or if we design to enrich or indulge ourselves in any forbidden way, without smarting for our sin, we shall find, sooner or later, that "Jehovah is there," with his penalty in his hand. 2. When *we think we can succeed without his blessing.* To succeed without the favouring presence of God and the co-operation of his gracious power is as hopelessly impossible as it is to sin without encountering his Divine displeasure and rebuke. If we prosper in our toil, if we find joy and gladness in our life, it will be only because "Jehovah is there;" because he makes our land to yield its increase, because he fills our soul with the blessedness that abides. 3. When *we think we can be wise without his teaching.* Neither workman in the field of nature nor student in the realm of truth can leave out of his account the presence and the aid of the Divine. There is nothing sadder than the sight of men seeking and straining after the wisdom that they want for life and for death and for eternity, trying to find their way by the light of the sparks of their own intelligence; this will they have of God—"that they will lie down in sorrow" (Isa. l. 10, 11). But blessed are they who take into their account the fact that "Jehovah is there," that God is speaking to us in his Word, by that Son who was and is the Eternal Word of God; for they who are wise in his wisdom shall enter the kingdom of truth, the kingdom of God, and they shall rise up in everlasting life and joy.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Vers. 1—38.—The present chapter is entirely devoted to the consolation of Israel, though its parts are derived from two separate "words" of Jehovah. Vers. 1—15 belong to the "word" which opened with the first verse of the preceding chapter; ver. 16 begins another "word," which only closes at ch. xxxvii. 14. The subject of the first part is the comfort offered to Israel in the destruction threatened against the heathen, and in the blessings promised to her land and people.

Ver. 1.—**Prophesy unto the mountains of Israel.** This prediction must be read in contrast, first, to that delivered against the mountains of Seir in the last chapter (xxxv.), and, secondly, to that uttered against the mountains of Israel at an earlier stage of Ezekiel's activity (ch. vi.). That "the mountains of Israel" was a familiar expression for the land of Israel, see ch. vi. 1; xvii. 22; xxxiii. 28; xxxiv. 14; xxxvii. 22; xxxviii. 8; and comp. Ps. cxxi. 1; Isa. lii. 7.

Ver. 2.—**Because the enemy hath said against you.** The ground of Jehovah's purposed proceeding against Edom and the surrounding heathen peoples (vers. 3, 5) is

expressly declared to be the jubilation over the downfall of Israel, and the eagerness with which they sought to appropriate to themselves her forsaken land. **Aha!** Exulting over Israel's misfortune (comp. ch. xxv. 3; Ps. xl. 16). **The ancient high places**, which Israel's enemies fancied had become theirs in possession, were probably "the everlasting hills" of Gen. xlix. 26 and Deut. xxxiii. 15, the principal mountains of Palestine, which, as Hävernick finely observes, were "the honourable witnesses and indestructible monuments of that ancient blessing spoken by Israel's ancestor, and still resting on the people;" and to assail which was, in consequence, not only to sin against Jehovah, but to attempt an enterprise foredoomed to failure and shame. At the same time, Plumptre's suggestion ('Ezekiel: an Ideal Biography,' *Expositor*, vol. viii. 284; and Unpublished Notes) is not without plausibility, that, considering the special significance of the term *bamoth* in Ezekiel, the phrase should be held as referring to the sanctuaries which stood upon those heights — including, of course, the chief sanctuary, or temple (Schröder); in support of which the dean cites the frequency with which the enemies of Israel, as, for instance, the Assyrians and the Moabites, in their inscriptions, boasted that they had captured these sanctuaries (see 'Records of the Past,' 2nd series, vol. i. p. 107; ii. 203).

Ver. 3.—**Therefore.** Ewald calls attention to the fivefold repetition of this conjunction, saying, "It repeats itself five times, the reasons [for God's judgments] against these enemies thrusting themselves forward, before the discourse calmly dwells upon the mountains of Israel, of which it is strictly intended to treat." As it were, the prophet's emotion is so strong, and his indignation against Israel's enemies so vehement, that, though he three times in succession begins to prophesy to the mountains of Israel, he on each occasion breaks off before he can get his message told, to expatiate upon the wickedness of Israel's foes. In the prophet's estimation that wickedness was so heinous as to inevitably carry in its bosom appropriate retribution. **Because**—literally, *because and because*, or *even because*, a reduplication for the sake of emphasis, as in ch. xiii. 10 and Lev. xxvi. 43—**they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side**; literally, *wasting of and panting after you* (are) *round about*. Fairbairn, Ewald, and Smend, deriving שַׁמּוֹת from שָׁמַם, "to pant," rather than from שָׁמֵם, "to lay waste," translate, "because there is snapping and puffing at you round about," which Plumptre thinks "falls in better with the context," since "the prophet's spirit seems to dwell throughout on the derision rather than the desolation to which his country, the mountains of Israel, had been subject." **And ye are taken up**; literally, *ye are made to come*, if וַתֵּעָלוּ be an imperf. niph. of עָלָה, "to go up" (Rosenmüller, Schröder); or, *ye are come*, if it be imperf. kal of עָלַל, "to press, or go in" (Ewald, Hävernick); or, *ye are gone up*, if it be second pers. kal of עָלָה (Hitzig, Smend). **In the lips of talkers**; literally, *upon the lip of the tongue*—the lip being regarded as the instrument or organ with which the tongue speaks. Hävernick unnecessarily takes "the tongue" as equivalent to "people" in the parallel clause—a signification לָשׁוֹן has only in Isa. lxvi. 18; while Kliefoth views it as synonymous with "slander," as in Ps. cxl. 11, and translates, "upon the lip of slander and of the evil report of the people." Keil sees in "the tongue" a personification for the "tongue-man" or talker of Ps. cxl. 11; and Gesenius considers the two clauses as tautological.

Ver. 4.—**The rivers** (or, *channels, bottoms, dales*) were the water-courses, wadies, or ravines through which mountain streams flowed, as in ch. xxxv. 8; and **the residue of the heathen** were the surrounding nations that had mocked Israel in her degradation, and were then profiting by her fall (comp. Ps. lxxix. 4).

Ver. 5.—**Surely.** אִם־לֹא, the particle of adjuration, as in ch. v. 11; xxxiii. 27; xxxiv. 8; xxxviii. 19. **The fire of my jealousy.** Zephaniah (i. 18; iii. 8) uses the same phrase. Similar expressions occur in ch. xxi. 31, "the fire of my wrath;" and ch. xxxviii. 19, "in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath" (comp. Deut. iv. 24). **Against all Idumea.** Edom. As in ch. xxxv. 15, so here, it is the wickedness, more especially of the Edomites, that excites the prophet's indignation. They had not only concluded that Israel's territory should be to them for a possession, but they had done so **with the joy of all their heart, and with despiteful minds**; or, *with contempt of soul* (comp. ch. xxv. 6, 15); *i.e.* with deadly (Ewald) or hearty (Smend) contempt. "The temper of the Edomites," writes Plumptre, "might almost serve as the regulative instance of the form of evil for which Aristotle ('Eth. Nic.,' 2, 7, 15) seems to have coined the word *ἐπιχαιρεκακία*, the temper which rejoices in the ills that fall on others." The concluding clause, **to cast it out for a prey**, has been differently rendered. (1) Regarding מְנָרְשָׁהּ as an infinitive after לְמַעַן, "to spoil it," *i.e.* the land (Gesenius), "empty out" (Keil) or "drive out" (Ewald, Smend) its inhabitants (so as to

get it) for a prey. (2) Taking מְנֻרָשָׁה as a noun, "for the sake of its possession for a prey" (Kliefoth), "that their suburbs should be a prey" (Hengstenberg), "on account of its pasturage for a prey" (Schröder). (3) Changing לָבֹז into לָבוֹז, "in order to plunder its produce" (Hitzig) or "pasturage" (Fairbairn).

Vers. 6, 7.—**Because ye have borne the shame of the heathen** (*i.e.* the shame cast upon you by the heathen, see ch. xxxiv. 29) . . . **surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame.** Not the shame which should be cast upon them by Israel, which would be retaliation, but their own shame—the shame due to them in virtue of the Divine law of retribution (ch. xvi. 52), their own curses come home to roost, Ezekiel seeming to distinguish between retaliation and retribution. "The law [of retribution] is demanded by the absolute righteousness of God. The judicial visitations of God cannot possibly be one-sided. Punishment can so much the less strike Israel alone, as precisely in its punishment the deep degradation of heathendom, its apostasy from God and its pride, has set itself forth in the most striking way" (Hävernick). The certainty that this law would operate in the case of the heathen no less than in that of Israel, the prophet expresses by representing Jehovah as having lifted up his hand, or sworn that it should be so (comp. ch. xx. 5, 6, 15, 23, 28; xlvii. 14; Exod. vi. 8; Numb. xiv. 30; Deut. xxxii. 40; and Virgil, 'Æneid,' xii. 195, "Tenditque ad sidera dextram").

Ver. 8.—**For they are at hand to come.** Keil and Plumptre make the subject of the verb the material blessings in which Israel's prosperity is depicted as consisting, viz. the foliage and fruit her mountains were soon to bear for the people of Jehovah. The majority of expositors believe the subject to be the people whose return from exile was in this way declared to be approaching. Nor is there any reason why Ezekiel should not have represented the return from exile as an event soon to take place, since of the seventy years of captivity predicted by Jeremiah (xxv. 11) at least twenty years had passed, if its commencement be dated from the fourth year of Jehoiakim (ch. xxxiii. 21); and the fulfilment of Jehovah's promise was to the prophet so much a matter of certainty (ch. xi. 17) that his fervent imagination conceived it as at hand.

Ver. 9.—**I am for you.** He had previously been against (ch. v. 8; xiii. 8), but was now for Israel and against Seir (ch. xxxv. 3). This change of dispensation implied no mutation in God, but merely that, as God had previously visited Israel with judgment on account of sin, so henceforth would he visit her with grace on condition of repentance. **I will turn unto you.** Always it is presupposed that Israel turns unto Jehovah.

Vers. 10, 11.—**I will multiply men upon you.** Jehovah's promise contemplated a return of both sections of the *Golah*, **the whole house of Israel,** Ephraim as well as Judah (comp. ch. xx. 40), to the land from which they had been deported, and a restoration of the united kingdom to a condition of prosperity in which its cities should again be inhabited, its ruined homesteads repaired, its fields cultivated, and its flocks and herds multiplied (see ch. xvi. 55; Isa. xliv. 26; liv. 3; lxi. 4)—a condition of prosperity so great that it should surpass any measure or degree of good fortune previously enjoyed (comp. Deut. xxx. 5; Job xlii. 12).

Ver. 14.—**Thou shalt devour men no more.** From the middle of ver. 12 the form of address changes from the plural to the singular, the whole country, mountains, and valleys being regarded as one land, as in Deut. iii. 25. The charge preferred against the country by her enemies was that she had been a land that devoured men and "bereaved its nations" (or, "nation," Revised Version); literally, *an eater-up of men and a bereaver of thy nations;* i.e. of Israel and Judah, perhaps also of the Canaanites, their predecessors (Fausset), the image being that of a wild beast which ravages the population and makes them childless, as in ch. v. 17 and xiv. 15 (Smend), rather than that of an unnatural mother, a *Rabenmutter*, as in 2 Kings vi. 29, who devours her offspring (Ewald). This charge, in which, perhaps, the prophet detected an allusion to Numb. xiii. 32, had certainly in times past been true; not, however, as Hengstenberg suggests, because the land had been "an apple of discord for the Asiatic and African powers," or, as Ewald explains, because "the tremendous restlessness, the excited push and hurry of such a mentally active city must in any case have used up its inhabitants more rapidly;" but, as Keil, Plumptre, and others interpret, because of the judgments of sword, famine, and pestilence sent upon the land by Jehovah for its sins. These judgments had so destroyed its inhabitants, first the Canaanites, and latterly the two peoples of Israel and Judah, that "those who looked upon it deemed it a fatal land, which brought destruction to all who should occupy it" (Currey). In the golden age to which the prophet looked forward, no such reproach should be possible. Not only should the land not bereave its nations

(according to the Keri, followed by the Authorized and Revised Versions, as well as by Ewald and Smend), but (according to the Chethib, preferred by Keil, Kliefoth, Hävernick, Hengstenberg, Schröder, and Plumptre) it should not even cause them (or it) to stumble; *i.e.* should no more cause its inhabitants to lapse into those sins, amongst which idolatry stood prominent, which entailed on them ruin. Hengstenberg's idea, that "moral stumbling is not to be thought of in this connection," is certainly to be rejected.

Ver. 15.—**Neither will I cause men to hear in thee**—*let thee hear, proclaim against thee* (Revised Version); or literally, *cause to be heard against thee*—**the shame of the heathen any more**; *i.e.* the contemptuous speech uttered against thee by the heathen, equivalent to the reproach of the people; or, *peoples*; i.e. the reproach cast upon thee by the nations (see ch. xvi. 57; xxii. 4; and comp. Josh. v. 9; Micah vi. 16), rather than, as Currey suggests, the reproach cast upon thee by thy rightful possessors for want of fertility. This prophecy clearly looked beyond the return from exile under Zerubbabel and Joshua, Ezra and Nehemiah, since under these leaders only a portion of the whole house of Israel re-established themselves in Canaan, while the land was often afterwards subjected to reproach and oppression under heathen powers. At the same time, the homecoming from Babylon and the prosperity that ensued thereupon were partial fulfilments of the blessings here promised.

Ver. 16.—The oracle, commencing with this verse and extending to ch. xxxvii. 14, has an ultimate connection with that which precedes. Having predicted a golden age in the future for Israel, when her people should have returned from banishment, her cities should again be inhabited and her fields cultivated, the prophet is directed (1) to explain that the ground of this would not lie in any worthiness Jehovah should behold in Israel, who had rather in the past been punished and dispersed (vers. 16—20), but only in the regard he, Jehovah, should have for his own holy Name or character (vers. 21—24); (2) to intimate that this glorious period should be accompanied by a moral and spiritual renovation of the people, which, however, could and therefore would be brought about only by God himself giving them a new heart and a new spirit, again for his own Name's sake (vers. 25—32), and which, when attained, should lead to a prosperity so unparalleled as to recall the pristine splendours of earth's paradisiacal condition, and convince the heathen that should then be sharers in Israel's felicity that Jehovah alone was God (vers. 33—38); and (3) to remove all doubt from the people's minds as to the possibility of this happening by the vision of the dry bones (ch. xxxvii. 1—14).

Vers. 16—20.—That Israel's restoration should not be brought about on account of Israel's merit, the prophet shows by briefly rehearsing the story of Israel's demerit, as the reason of her exile.

Ver. 17.—**Their way was before me.** Their ways and doings, *i.e.* their violent deeds and idolatrous practices (ver. 18), were as morally loathsome in Jehovah's sight as the uncleanness of a woman in her separation was materially disgusting. The comparison may have been derived from Isa. lxiv. 6, but was as likely to have been original, seeing Ezekiel was a priest-prophet, to whom the details of the Levitical Law must have been familiar (comp. ch. xviii. 6; Lev. xv. 19).

Ver. 19.—**According to their way and according to their doings I judged them.** The language hints at a correspondence between the punishment and the crime. As a woman in her separation was not only defiled, but separated from the congregation (Lev. xv. 19), so Israel, having defiled both herself and her land, required to be removed from it (Lev. xviii. 28). And she was. Jehovah scattered her among the heathen and dispersed her through the countries.

Ver. 20.—**They profaned my holy Name**; or, *the name of my holiness*. According to Kliefoth, the subject of the verb is "the heathen," but expositors generally regard it as "the house of Israel" of ver. 17. Plumptre thinks that "while grammatically the words may refer to either the heathen or the exiles of Israel, possibly the sentence was purposely left vague, so as to describe the fact in which both were sharers," and cites in support of this view similar constructions in Isa. lv. 5 and Rom. ii. 24. What led to the profanation of Jehovah's Name by the heathen was the arrival among them, not of the news of the calamity which had befallen Israel (Kliefoth, Hengstenberg), but of the house of Israel itself; and the actual profanation lay in this, that, having beheld the exiles, they said, **These are the people of the Lord, and they are gone forth out of his land.** As the heathen recognized only local divinities, they concluded Jehovah had either behaved capriciously towards his people and cast them off (comp. Jer. xxiii. 40; xxix. 18; xxxiii. 24), or had proved unequal to the task of protecting them, so that they had been driven off (comp. ch. xx. 5, etc.; Numb. xiv. 16; Jer. xiv. 9). In either case, the honour of Jehovah had been lessened in the minds

and tarnished by the words of the heathen, and inasmuch as this result had been brought about by Israel's sin, on Israel properly the blame lay.

Ver. 21.—**I had pity for mine holy Name.** Hävernick, after the LXX., wrongly renders, "I spared (them, *i.e.* Israel) for my holy Name's sake;" but the preposition "for" or "upon" following the verb usually marks the object upon which the action of the verb terminates (see ch. xvi. 5). Gesenius translates, "I will be sparing of my holy Name;" *i.e.* I will care for its honour.

Ver. 22.—**Not for your sakes . . . but for mine holy Name's sake.** Thus Jehovah repudiates the claim of merit on Israel's part (comp. ver. 32); and if Israel had no claim on Jehovah for deliverance from the Babylonish exile any more than she had at first to be put in possession of Canaan (Deut. ix. 6), much less has fallen man a claim on God for salvation from the condemnation and dominion of sin (Rom. xi. 6; Eph. ii. 8—10). As the essential holiness and righteousness of God were the real reason of Israel's exile and dispersion among the nations, so were these qualities in God the ultimate grounds to which Israel's recovery and restoration should be traced.

Ver. 23.—**I will sanctify my great Name;** *i.e.* the name of my holiness (Deut. xxviii. 58; Ps. viii. 1; Mal. i. 11). As Israel's dispersion had caused that Name to be profaned, so Israel's restoration would secure that it should be magnified among the heathen (ch. xxxviii. 23), who should learn from this event that their previous ideas of Jehovah, as a feeble and local divinity, had been wrong. The question whether **your eyes,** as in the Hebrew text, or "their eyes," as in many ancient versions, should be read is debated. The latter reading appears to be demanded by the *usus loquendi* of Ezekiel (see ch. xx. 41; xxviii. 25; xxxviii. 16; xxxix. 27), and is adopted by both English versions as well as by interpreters of eminence; but other expositors of equal name adhere to the former reading on the ground that the sanctifying of Jehovah's Name in the eyes of Israel was an indispensable preliminary to its sanctification in the eyes of the heathen. Hävernick regards "their eyes" as "an obvious emendation to relieve a difficulty," to which in no case should criticism accord the preference; while Keil gives it the preference, though admitting that "your eyes" can be justified.

Ver. 24.—**I will take you from among the heathen;** or, *nations.* The first step in the sanctification of Jehovah's Name. A promise already given (ch. xi. 17; xx. 41, 42), and afterwards repeated (ch. xxxvii. 21). The mention of "all countries" shows the prophet's gaze to have been directed beyond the present or immediate future. The Israel of Ezekiel's time had not been scattered among and could not be gathered from all countries; yet in the years that have passed since then Ezekiel's language as to Israel's dispersion has been literally fulfilled. Wherefore the inference is reasonable that the reassembling to which Ezekiel refers is an event that has not yet occurred, at least in its fullest measure and degree, but will only then be realized completely and finally when the scattered members of the house of Israel shall have been received into the Christian Church (Rom. xi. 25, 26).

Ver. 25.—**Then** (literally, *and*) **I will sprinkle clean water upon you.** The second step in the sanctification of Jehovah's Name, and one absolutely necessary to render the preceding either permanent or valuable, was the moral renovation of the people; and in this the first stage was the forgiveness of the people's sins. The image under which this is set forth, "sprinkling with clean water," would naturally present itself to a priest-prophet such as Ezekiel. Jarchi, Rosenmüller, Hengstenberg, and others suppose the allusion to be to the water of purification prepared by mixing running water with the ashes of a red heifer (Numb. xix. 17—19), and in the account given of this rite the verb for "sprinkle" is that used by Ezekiel, viz. זָרַק. Hävernick prefers the rite performed in the consecration of the Levites (Numb. viii. 7, 21). Smend, who holds the priest-code had no existence in Ezekiel's day, traces the image to Zech. xiii. 1 or Ps. li. 2, though he also cites Numb. viii. 19. Hitzig, Kliefoth, and Currey think of the lustrations of the Law in general; and perhaps this best explains the prophet's language, since the element sprinkled is not "blood" or "water mixed with ashes," but "clean water," "the best known means of purification" (Schröder). As to whether legal or moral cleansing were intended by the prophet, possibly Ezekiel drew no sharp distinction between the two, such as the New Testament draws between justification and sanctification; if he did, then the figure in the text must be taken as alluding rather to the former than to the latter—rather to the forgiveness of Israel's sin than to the regeneration of Israel's heart, which is next referred to.

Vers. 26, 27.—**A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.** The third step in the progress of sanctifying Jehovah's Name (comp. ch. xi. 19, where a similar promise is made, and ch. xviii. 31, where the new heart is represented as a thing Israel must make for herself). This antinomy frequently occurs in Scripture, which never shrinks from holding man responsible for the production of that,

as *e.g.* faith, for which he is incompetent without the help of Divine grace. Besides the cleansing of her guilt and her restitution in consequence to Jehovah's favour, Israel is promised such an inward renovation of her moral and spiritual disposition as to secure that she shall in future adhere to the worship and service of Jehovah. This change is described in a fourfold way. (1) *Negatively*, as a removal of the old, stony, unsusceptible heart, which had remained impervious to all appeals and insensible to all higher feelings (Zech. vii. 12). (2) *Positively*, as a new heart and a new spirit, called elsewhere "one heart" and "a heart of flesh" (ch. xi. 19; Jer. xxxii. 39), "a heart to know God" (Jer. xxiv. 7). (3) *Causally*, its existence being traced to the indwelling of God's Spirit, who writes God's Law upon the new heart, and inclines it to a life of obedience thereto (Jer. xxxi. 33). (4) *Practically*, by its manifestation, walking in God's statutes and keeping God's judgments (ch. xi. 20). The account here furnished of the moral and spiritual change proposed to be inwrought on Israel corresponds exactly with that given in the New Testament of the regeneration of the individual soul (John iii. 3—8; Rom. viii. 2, 5, 9; Gal. v. 22; Titus iii. 5, 6; 1 Pet. i. 22).

Vers. 28—31 describe the results which should follow in Israel's experience when God should have thus gathered, cleansed, and renewed them. They should then have (1) permanent occupation of the land (ver. 28); (2) covenant relationship with God as his people (ver. 28); (3) protection against future lapsing into idolatry and immorality (ver. 29); (4) abundant supply for every want (vers. 29, 30); and (5) a deepening sense of self-humiliation on account of and repentance for past sin (ver. 31).

Ver. 28.—**Ye shall dwell in the land.** As the Jews who returned from Babylon did not permanently dwell in the land, but were again ejected from it, the promise contained in these words must be viewed as having been conditional on the realization of the moral and spiritual purity above described. If, therefore, it be argued that inasmuch as this promise must be fulfilled (2 Cor. i. 20; Heb. x. 23), the Jews must yet be restored to Palestine, the reply is that their return can only take place when they have been converted to Christianity; so that the whole promise must be regarded as receiving its highest fulfilment in the experiences of the Church of Christ. That this view is correct is vouched for by the fact that the words, **Ye shall be my people and I will be your God** (comp. ch. xi. 20; Jer. vii. 23; xi. 4; xxx. 22), descriptive of the covenant relationship in which Jehovah stood towards Israel (Exod. xix. 5; Lev. xxvi. 12; Deut. xxvi. 17, 18), have been chosen by New Testament writers to set forth the relationship of God towards the Christian Church, first here on earth (2 Cor. vi. 16—18), and afterwards in the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 3).

Ver. 29.—**From all your uncleannesses.** The same word as in ver. 25, though with a difference in meaning. From their uncleanness of the past they have already been saved (ver. 25); the present promise guarantees preservation against future lapsing into uncleanness, *i.e.* the filthiness of idol-service. "With this," writes Plumptre, "the necessity for temporal chastisements as a corrective discipline should cease, and there would be nothing to check the full outpouring of all material as well as spiritual blessings." With the phrase, **I will call for the corn,** compare the similar expressions in 2 Kings viii. 1; Hos. ii. 23, etc.; Jer. xxxi. 12; Zech. ix. 17.

Ver. 31.—**Ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight** (comp. ch. xvi. 61; xlii. 10). The last result of this enlarged experience of the Divine goodness would be to quicken in the heart of forgiven and renewed Israel a sense of shame and a feeling of repentance (comp. Rom. ii. 4).

Ver. 32 repeats and emphasizes the thought of ver. 22, that the true ground of God's gracious dealing with Israel should be found, not in their merit, but in his grace. So far as their ways were concerned, there was cause only for judgment on his part and self-humiliation on theirs.

Vers. 33—36 describe the effect of Israel's restored prosperity on the surrounding nations.

Ver. 35.—**This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden.** (For the reverse picture, see Joel ii. 3.) The thought of the first Paradise (Gen. ii. 8), in the historicity of which clearly Ezekiel believed, was one on which his mind often dwelt (ch. xxviii. 13; xxxi. 9) as an ideal of earthly beauty and fertility which should recur in the closing ago of the world—a hope which appears to have been shared by Isaiah (li. 3), and taken up by John (Rev. ii. 7; xxii. 1—3). In the day when that hope should be realized for Israel, **the waste, desolate, and ruined cities,** on which the passers-by who visited Palestine gazed, should be **fenced and inhabited**; literally, *inhabited as fortresses*. The three predicates, "waste," "desolate," and "ruined," have been distinguished as signifying "stripped of its inhabitants,"

"untilled in its lands," and "broken down in its buildings;" in contrast with which, in the golden era of the future, the towns should be inhabited, the fields tilled, and the ruined fortresses built.

Ver. 36.—**The heathen that are left round about you.** The language presupposes that at or before the time of Israel's restoration the judgments pronounced against the nations will have overtaken them, so that only a remnant of them will be then in existence. Kliefoth and Currey view this remnant as those who shall have been converted out of heathendom and become attached to the community of Israel, like "the nations of the saved" in Rev. xxi. 24; Keil, with more accuracy, regards their conversion as resulting from their recognition of the hand of God in building again the wastes places of Jerusalem.

Ver. 37.—**I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel.** On two previous occasions (ch. xiv. 3; xx. 3), Jehovah had declined to be inquired of by the hypocritical and idol-loving elders of Israel, who pretended to consult him through his prophet; now he makes it known that in the future era no barrier of moral and spiritual unfitness on their part will prevent their free approach to his throne, but rather that they will come to him with fervent supplications for the very blessings he has promised. In answer to their prayers, he engages, going back to the language of ch. xxxiv. 22, to **increase them with men like a flock**—incorrectly rendered by Kliefoth to "multiply them so that they shall become the flock of mankind." Thus he meets the despondency of those among the exiles who, fixing their attention on the small number of them who should form the new Israel—those who should return with those, perhaps, who still remained in the land—could not see how Israel's future prosperity was to be secured.

Ver. 38.—The people who should occupy the land of Israel in the coming age should be **as the holy flock**—literally, *as the flock of holy things*, or beasts; *i.e.* of sacrificial lambs—**as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts**; literally, *in her appointed times;* i.e. her festal seasons (comp. Micah ii. 12), referring to the three well-known annual occasions when the male population of the land came to the sanctuary (Deut. xvi. 16), and when in consequence the flocks and herds poured into the metropolis were well-nigh past reckoning (see 2 Chron. xxix. 33; xxxv. 7; and comp. Josephus, 'Wars,' vi. 9. 3). Perhaps in addition to the idea of the multiplication of the people, that of their dedication to the service of Jehovah is suggested by the prophet's language.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 2.—*Premature triumph.* The enemies of Israel were triumphing over the fallen nation, but prematurely; for they did not reckon on a possibility of a restoration. This is like the triumph of evil over the ruined world.

I. THERE IS A TRIUMPH OF EVIL. 1. *In the fall of man.* When Adam fell it seemed as though the greatest work of God had been hopelessly ruined almost as soon as it appeared. No sooner was man made in the image of God than he grovelled in the dust, and marred the heavenly likeness with ugly stains of sins. 2. *In the history of primitive man.* So evil is man that the whole race, with the exception of a single family, is swept off the face of the earth. Once more the world is reduced to a desolate condition, once more evil seems to have conquered. 3. *In the troubles of the Hebrews.* The people of God become oppressed slaves in Egypt. "Where is the promise delivered to the fathers?" 4. *In the failure to enter Palestine.* The Israelites reach the borders of the land, and are then driven back defeated, and compelled to wander in the wilderness for forty years. 5. *In the miserable days of the judges.* When the land was at length possessed, it was not found to be all milk and honey. War and wickedness, sorrow and shame, make the first ages of the possession of Canaan almost the darkest period in Jewish history. 6. *The wickedness of later days.* The story of Israel is a story of repeated rebellions against God, and repeated Divine chastisements. 7. *In the Captivity.* When the two nations were driven into captivity, and their territory devastated by the heathen, the triumph of the enemies of the people of God seemed to be complete. 8. *In the cruelty of later days.* Eastern empires, the Seleucidæ, and the Romans successively triumphed over and oppressed the once favoured people. 9. *In the cross of Christ.* Here, indeed, the enemies of righteousness reach their crowning triumph. Satan now exults over the sorrow and death of the Son of man. 10. *In the history of Christendom.* This has not been a history of continuous growth and victory over evil. First there were the great per-

secutions. Then followed the great apostasy. The dark ages marked the triumph of ignorance and cruelty. To-day the powers of evil are mighty and exultant.

II. THIS TRIUMPH WILL BE REVERSED. It is premature. We have not yet reached the end of the story. The battle is still raging; it is too early for the foe to sing his pæans of victory. All along the dark recital of victories of evil there has been the alternative picture of Divine deliverance. We make a mistake when we dwell only on the gloomy side of history. God has been revealing himself in history. Not only did he save the eight in the ark. He delivered all Israel from Egypt. He gave Canaan, and he gave restoration from the Captivity. He sent his Son to save the world. In the darkest hour when Christ hung dying on the cross while evil seemed to be most triumphant, victory was really being won by that very death of the world's Saviour. We have not seen the end yet. Perhaps we are on the fringe of a great contest between the servants of Christ and his foes. But never was the work of Christ more manifest than it is to-day in Christian activity at home and in the harvest of the mission-field abroad. While the unbeliever exults in what he thinks is the demonstration of the falsehood of Christianity and the sure prospect of its speedy downfall, there are more earnest active Christians at work than ever there were. By the grace of God we may trust that, though the battle is still fierce, we are moving on to victory under the Captain of our salvation.

Vers. 8, 9.—*Returning prosperity.* I. RESTORATION OF CHARACTER BRINGS A RETURN OF PROSPERITY. During the absence of the captives in Babylon their land fell into decay. The mountains which had been carefully terraced for vines were neglected, just as they are to-day on the hills about Jerusalem, where rows of stones mark the site of the ancient terraces. Sin ultimately ruins the outer as well as the inner man, for the prosperity of the wicked is but temporary, and though it may extend through an individual lifetime, it must break down during the course of the longer life of a nation. But on the other hand, restoration to God undoes the ruin of the outer life. This too may be a slow process. The individual man who has beggared himself with sinful extravagance may never become rich; but the nation that has returned to better ways of living will in time reap the good results of its renovation of character even on earth. When we think not only of external prosperity, but of inward blessedness, the result is seen sooner, and it is found in every individual soul that is pardoned and renewed. No one need despair of his present desolation. Repentance renews the face of the penitent's whole life.

II. THIS RETURN OF PROSPERITY IS CAUSED BY A RETURN OF GOD. "For behold I am with you, and I will turn unto you." God had abandoned the guilty land. Therefore a blight had fallen upon it. If God deserts a man, nothing can really prosper with him. He may still coin gold in his business, but it will be a curse to him. When God smiles upon a man's life he brings, not necessarily *wealth*, but certainly *welfare*. It would be well for everybody to ask himself—Is my business such that I dare ask God into it? Can I regard my workshop as a temple, or my work as a sacrifice? For these are the conditions on which true prosperity depends, because they are the conditions of God's gracious help.

III. THE RETURN OF GOD IS ACCOMPANIED BY A REVIVAL OF HUMAN ACTIVITY. "And ye shall be tilled and sown." That work will not be done directly by God, nor will it be accomplished by the unseen hands of angel-husbandmen. Men must till and sow. God's blessing does not dispense with man's labour. Assuredly it is not an excuse for human idleness. On the contrary, it is the inspiration of the highest activity. God blesses by stirring men up to wise and earnest work. St. Paul teaches us that God gives the increase after man's sowing and watering (1 Cor. iii. 6). But Ezekiel shows that God's great work does not only follow man's smaller toil; it precedes that toil, and is the spring from which the energy for it proceeds. We are first told that God will turn unto his people, and not till after this is it said, "And ye shall be tilled and sown." This is the happiest way of giving prosperity. If all the glory is God's, still the joy of service is man's. The same is true of spiritual prosperity. If we would reap a harvest in Christian work, we must not only bring it to God and ask his blessing upon it; we must first of all seek his presence in it, that it may be his work from the first. Then he will be the Inspiration of his servants' activity.

We shall be able to till and sow just because God is with us. The glorious prosperity will come from God as a fruit of his gracious benediction, and it will come through us as the human instruments who are called by God like labourers to work in his vineyard.

Ver. 10.—*Multiplying men.* I. THE TRUE WEALTH OF A PEOPLE IS IN ITS POPULATION. God makes this promise to the house of Israel, that he "will multiply men." The land is desolate for want of inhabitants, the fields untilled for want of labourers, and the cities lying in ruins for lack of men to build up the waste places. The restoration shall be signalized by a return of the captives and a consequent increase of population. Now, the striking fact is that this multiplication of the population is noted as a great good for the land. Other things being equal, every country is strong in proportion to the number of its able-bodied citizens. In times of war this is obvious; the strong nation is one that can command a large army. But in industrial relations the same is equally true. The more producers there are the more wealth must be produced—either in the form of food or in the form of commodities that may be exchanged for food purchased elsewhere. These plain facts are obscured by bad social habits. 1. *Overcrowding in cities.* The waste places should be built—not the reeking fever-dens crammed with an overflowing population of sickly creatures, who have no energy for work, and whose surroundings do not permit decent living. One of the greatest evils of our day is the depletion of our rural districts and the pressing of the population into the cities. What is needed is not a reduction of the population, but a scattering of it over the face of the land at home and also throughout the colonies. The mistake that led to the building of the tower of Babel is still fatally prevalent. 2. *Unworthy living.* Too many men are not doing men's work—idle rich men who consume without producing, and idle poor men who are always near the border-land of crime, on the further side of which they would become positive destroyers. We cannot have too many true men, but they must be men indeed—workers, not drones.

II. THE STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH IS IN ITS MEMBERSHIP. The word "Church" stands for a community. The great Catholic Church of all nations and creeds is the whole body of Christians. This obvious fact is too often neglected. Thus the Church is sometimes regarded as an institution apart from the souls of which it consists; it is said to have its rights, its triumphs, while no thought is given to the people in it. This is a pure delusion—the glorification of an empty abstraction. Again, for the Church some would substitute its officers. The Christian ministry is regarded as the Church. This was the case in the Middle Ages, when popes and great ecclesiastical dignitaries contended with emperors and kings for the privileges of the Church. In those contests little account was taken of the interest of the people—the townsfolk and village folk who constituted the body of the Church. But in these democratic days the rights of the people are being better recognized, and now we are coming to see that the Church is just the men, women, and children that constitute it, viewed in their corporate relation as the body of Christ on earth. The Church is honoured when men are multiplied in her midst. She cannot be in health if the missionary spirit dies out of her. But while she gathers in the heathen her first duty is to train her own children. She should thus grow her own members. Here, however, we need a caution. Mere numbers will count for nothing apart from character. Statistical Christianity is a poor production. We want true men—living souls united to Christ and working for his glory. Still, the honour of the Church is not in remaining small and select, and keeping her privileges to herself and neglecting the world, but in multiplying men. She should be a great popular institution, true to the spirit of Christ, who called himself "the Son of *man*."

Ver. 11 ("And I will do better unto you than at your beginnings").—*The better future.* I. THE BETTER FUTURE OF THE WORLD. There is a natural tendency among men to say, "The former times were better." Nations cherish legends of an ancient golden age. People talk about "the good old times." But when we search history we cannot find these happy days. On the contrary, writers in the very ages to which some of our contemporary dreamers look back with sentimental regret deplore the degeneracy of their days. Our own age is bad enough, but it is not easy to lay our finger on any previous age that was not worse. This, however, is not the principal

question. Waiving the point as to whether the past history of our race has been characterized by progress or by a process of degeneration, we have still to ask whether the future may not be better than anything that has been experienced in the past. Now, it is the distinct teaching of the Bible that it will be so. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." While men turn back wistfully to the lost Eden, God promises a better heaven. We do not need to discuss the idea of a Paradise regained, for we have the more glowing picture of the heavenly Jerusalem. Even if we grant the worst that has been said of man's continuous decline, the New Testament points to an arrest of this dreadful movement, to a redemption and more than a restoration, to a perfection of humanity never attained in the past.

II. THE BETTER FUTURE OF THE CHURCH. The Church, which has the seed of Divine life in her, should be continually growing in grace. While like the mustard tree she enlarges her size, she should also, like the rising temple, become ever more radiant with the beauty of holiness. Perhaps there is no sadder story than that of the history of the Church. No doubt there have been ages of glorious zeal and devotion; no doubt God has been continuously educating his people. But there have been awful times of relapse. We think we can see progress in our own day—a wiser thought, a larger charity, a more practical activity in the service of man. But we are far indeed from realizing Christ's great ideal. That ideal, however, is the picture of the future, and the pattern after which we are to toil with the utmost hopefulness. The New Testament promises a glorious future to the people of God (Eph. ii. 21).

III. THE BETTER FUTURE OF THE SOUL. In our melancholy moods we yearn after the old sweet days of childhood—their innocence, their simplicity, their joyousness. We forget their limitations, their fears, their infantine distresses. But perhaps we have fallen far from those early days. Then we knew nothing of the world's dreadful sin. Now we must confess that we have not kept ourselves unspotted. And with the soul's fall has come the soul's sorrow, and many disappointments and losses have made the day which dawned in golden sunshine overcast with gloomy clouds. Still, we have not reached the end. After bathing in the Jordan, Naaman's leprous flesh became healthy as that of a little child. The leprous soul may be cleansed, the worn-out life renewed. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. v. 17). Then the future is full of hope. The victorious Christian, with all his scars, and even with his memory of shameful unfaithfulness, stands higher than the unfallen because untried child. God has a blessed future in the heavenly inheritance reserved for the most weary souls. The secret of this happy prospect is in the power and grace of God. It is he who will do better for his people than at the beginning.

Vers. 21—24.—*God saving for his own Name's sake.* I. A PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE ACTION. We are here admitted to the secret council-chamber of heaven. The inner motive of God's activity is revealed to us. He shows on what grounds he proceeds in redeeming man. Man is redeemed for the sake of God's Name, and not on account of any human deserts and claims. 1. *God's faithfulness.* A person's good name is associated with his keeping his word. If a man has put his name to a document, he must not ignore its stipulations. A just person will swear to his own hurt and not change. Now, God is the type and pattern of all truth and fidelity. His eternal constancy lies at the root of the order of the universe. What he has promised he will do, because he is faithful. But he has promised redemption (*e.g.* ch. xxxiv. 22—31). Therefore he will redeem his people, that he may redeem his word. Though it costs the sacrifice of his Son, nothing shall be wanting to a faithful execution of his promise. 2. *God's character.* The name is supposed to express the nature. God is named after what he is. Now, God's nature is essentially good and gracious. With the New Testament before us, we know that God's best name is Love (1 John iv. 8). Jesus Christ has taught us to concentrate our thoughts of God on his Fatherhood. God will act according to his Name, *i.e.* according to his nature. Love must characterize his conduct, and whatever he does he will do it "like as a father." His fatherly character will lead him to redeem and save, irrespective of desert, for sheer love and pity. 3. *God's glory.* To get a name is to receive glory. When Christ is glorified he is said to receive "a Name which is above every name" (Phil. ii. 9). God's Name is his glory. Now, God is glorified in many ways, but in none so highly as in his saving the lost.

The best song of heavenly praise is the hymn of redemption (Rev. v. 9). There is glory in creation; and the greatness, the order, the beauty, the life of the universe praise God. There is glory in Divine government; and the manner in which God rules all things and establishes righteousness displays his glory. But we know of no glory like that of God's grace revealed at Calvary. This fact should help us to understand how God can ask for his own glory without being selfish. When men seek their own glory they usually do so at the expense of, or to the neglect of, others. But God's glory shines out of his supreme self-sacrifice. This is the secret of the highest glory.

II. ITS PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES. 1. *We can never hope to earn salvation.* It is a gift of God, never a work or reward of man. (1) This is a rebuke for pride. (2) It also warns us against the folly of seeking to establish some claim with God by penance, works, or sacrifice.

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

2. *We need never despair of salvation.* If it were given for our own sakes in any way, we might well torture ourselves with doubts as to whether we should merit it, nay, we had better give up all hope at once, for we could not earn it. But now the ground is shifted from ourselves to God. The question is not as to what is in us, but as to what is in him. The most unworthy, those who have made the worst failures in life, the weakest or the most sinful, may yet dare to hope for full and perfect salvation through the great grace of God, for his Name's sake. 3. *We have the highest reasons for joy and adoration.* The redemption is offered to the worst sinners—to all men, on their repenting and seeking the grace of God. Here is a glad fact and one to inspire eternal praise. Translating it into Christian language, we see that we are to rejoice and glory in salvation given to us through Christ; for Christ is "the Word" (John i. 1), *i.e.* the Name of God. God saves for the sake of his Name when he saves for Christ's sake.

Ver. 25.—"*Clean water.*" I. SOULS NEED CLEANSING FROM SIN. Here we come to the deeper part of man's need. The Jews perceived their external disasters only too clearly. War, captivity, poverty, sickness, death, were visible evils. But they did not so readily discern the unseen spiritual evils which were behind those troubles, as their causes. The greatest calamity is not so bad as sin. While we are eager to elude the consequences of wrong-doing, God sees that the wrong-doing itself is our chief evil. The principal part of the redemption required by Israel was not deliverance from the power of Babylon, but deliverance from the tyranny of sin; their most needed recovery was not restoration to Palestine, but restoration to God. To be cleansed from their idolatry and brought into a condition of spiritual worship was their greatest salvation. Israel is restored if that is done, even though she be still far from possessing her land; she is not restored without it, though she have the fee simple of every acre of Palestine.

II. THE CLEANSING OF SOULS WILL REMOVE BOTH THE GUILT AND THE POWER OF SIN. 1. *The guilt.* Sin leaves a stain behind. Blame justly attaches itself to all wrong-doing, and, though the deed of evil may be swiftly accomplished, the blame lingers long. The stain of sin is not merely an ugly fact; it produces dreadful consequences. (1) It excludes the soul from the presence of God. No stained souls can be permitted to tread the courts of heaven. (2) It draws down the wrath of God. (3) It carries with it continuous shame. 2. *The power.* The evil is more than a stain upon the conscience. It is a poison within the soul. It works harm by its corrupting as well as its defiling influence. We need some antidote to this poison, or some wonderful cleansing that shall completely purge it out of our being—a real internal washing, not merely a clearing of a darkened reputation.

III. GOD HAS PROVIDED CLEANSING WATER. What is needed is clean water. Now, this is just what is not to be got in places of defilement. The foul soil stains and poisons the streams that flow through it. No human thing is clean from the contamination of man's great sin. Therefore there can be no human fountain for uncleanness. But God has opened a fountain, and the gospel of Christ introduces us to it. He is pure, and he can give perfect purification. The water that flows from this rock is not defiled with earth's contamination. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). Here we have the double cleansing.

The guilt is washed out by a Divine pardon given through the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ, and the impurity is purged away by the Holy Spirit communicated to us by the grace of God in Christ. The cross redeems from all sin. The Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world. There is perfect cleansing of character, motive, heart, and soul in Christ.

IV. THIS CLEANSING WATER IS SPRINKLED ON INDIVIDUAL SOULS FOR THEIR CLEANSING. It is not enough that the water exists, nor that we behold it, nor that it flows in a full, free torrent. 1. *It must be applied to each individual soul*—sprinkled. This great fact is suggested by the rite of baptism. The future tense is here used. The prophecy was written before the advent of Christ. But even now the future tense must be used for all who are still in sin and earnestly desire cleansing. Christ's atonement is finished; but his cleansing must be continually given afresh to separate souls. 2. *This cleansing is divinely given.* "I will sprinkle," etc. God himself cleanses souls. We have to repent and seek his mercy. Then he will work directly in his pardoning and purifying grace.

Ver. 26.—"*A new heart.*" We are here introduced to one of those profound utterances in which the Old Testament anticipates some of the richest truths of the New. The grace here promised was doubtless given in all ages to those who truly repented and sought it. But reading these words in the light of the gospel, we are able to see much more clearly what is their eternal significance.

I. THE ESSENCE OF SALVATION IS THE RENEWAL OF THE HEART. The commonest mistake is to ignore this most significant fact. People regard salvation too much as a change in the soul's estate rather than a change in its very nature. But while there is a change of condition, and while the greatest possible external consequences flow from the redemption of souls, that redemption does not consist in these things; they are but of secondary importance. The primary fact is internal. To be saved from the visible fires of a material hell, and to be carried aloft to the tangible pleasures of a celestial Paradise, may satisfy the Mohammedan-minded Christian, but it will not fulfil the great thought of Christ. Hearts are wrong, foul, diseased. Men have false ideas, corrupt desires and affections, evil imaginations, or perhaps a blank deadness of soul. Here is the seat of the disease; here, then, the cure must begin. Sin is heart-disease; salvation is heart-renewal.

II. THE OLD EVIL HEART IS OF STONE. A terrible and most significant description. 1. It is *hard.* It does not respond to the call of God; it neither perceives spiritual truth, nor feels Divine influences, nor responds to heavenly voices. It has no sympathy with God. It is inflexible and immobile. 2. It is *cold.* Not only does it not respond to the influences of God; in itself and in its new condition it is unfeeling. There is no glow of generous affection in the sinful heart. 3. It is *dead.* The heart is the most vital organ. For this part of the body to be petrified involves a fearful condition of utter death. The hands might be turned to stone, and yet the man might live. But if he had a heart of stone he must be dead. Souls are "dead in trespasses and sin" (Eph. ii. 1). Men fear a future death, but the Bible teaches that there is a present death of godless souls. 4. It is *unnatural.* A heart of stone—what can be more monstrous? Sin is all unnatural. It is contrary to nature not to have feelings of love for our heavenly Father.

III. GOD GIVES A NEW HEART OF FLESH. 1. *It is a new heart.* There is no curing the old one. "Ye must be born again" (John iii. 3). To be in Christ is to be "a new creature." Thus Christ gives complete renewal. Now, the hope of the world lies in this great fact. We try to patch up the face of society, but it is mortifying at the core; and Christ goes at once to the root of the matter. With creative power he makes the heart afresh, *i.e.* he gives quite new thoughts, feelings, and desires. The most abandoned wrecks of society may take courage and believe that even they can be saved if this is the glorious work of Christ in souls. 2. *It is a heart of flesh.* (1) *Tender.* The old coldness and hardness pass away. Pride, stubbornness, obstinacy, are broken down. The penitent soul is melted. The softening of the hardened spirit is an essential part of conversion. (2) *Sympathetic.* The renewed heart readily answers to the call of God and to the joys and sorrows of men. (3) *Living.* This new heart beats. It drives life-blood through the whole being. The fainting soul is invigorated.

Energy springs from the new heart. It pulsates with the vigour of a glad, strong life. (4) *Natural.* The heart is of flesh, not of some foreign angelic substance. Sin is monstrous, goodness natural. The true Christian is natural; he is intensely human. God's work in the soul brings a man into close sympathy with his fellows. It restores true human nature.

Ver. 27.—*The indwelling Spirit.* Three stages in redemption are successively brought before us. First, *cleansing:* "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you," etc.; second, *renewal:* "A new heart also will I give you," etc.; third, *inspiration:* "And I will put my Spirit within you." Let us now consider this third stage of the grand process of redemption.

I. THE PRESENCE OF GOD'S SPIRIT DEPENDS ON THE CONDITION OF MEN'S HEARTS AND LIVES. The third stage of redemption is closely connected with those that precede. It cannot be attained without them, any more than the top of the staircase can be reached without passing over the lower steps. We cannot reverse the order. Cleansing and renewal must precede inspiration. God does not dwell equally with all men. There are God-haunted souls and there are God-deserted souls. The Spirit of God entered into Samson (Judg. xiv. 6), but Satan entered into Judas (Luke xxii. 3). Here is one great motive for our seeking to attain to the two earlier stages. They are the conditions on which we may enter into the highest privileges of all religion.

II. GOD PUTS HIS SPIRIT IN THE HEARTS OF HIS PEOPLE. He does not merely give gifts; he also comes in his own Spirit's presence. The good man walks with God (Gen. v. 24). He enjoys God's abiding presence. He is a temple of the Holy Ghost. These facts show us that religion is not only a human experience of beliefs and devotion. Its creeds and its worship are but one side of it. Its deeper character lies on the other side, in the Divine action. In true religion God enters the soul and touches its secret centres.

III. THE PRESENCE OF GOD'S SPIRIT IS MANIFESTED BY ITS EFFECTS. We need not look for mystical signs like the incorruptible light which the monks of Mount Athos imagined they were able to see as the revelation of the very presence of God in our souls. We need not despair if immediate consciousness does not give us a vision of God's Spirit. The joy of communion should be very real. Yet it is rather by the fruits of the Spirit that we are to be assured of his presence (Gal. v. 22). They are of two kinds. 1. *Graces.* There are given to every soul, and consist in the illuminating, sanctifying, strengthening influence of the Holy Spirit. Thus God helps us to understand his truth, baptizes us with his holiness, and breathes into us the power of the Divine life. 2. *Gifts.* It is important to distinguish the graces of the Spirit from its gifts. While the former are for all Christians, the latter are special and distinctive. They vary in different ages and with different persons. There were gifts of healing, of prophesying, of tongues, in the ancient Church (Rom. xii. 6). Bezaleel had a gift for art (Exod. xxxv. 30, 31); Samson, a gift of strength (Judg. xiii. 25), etc.—all from the Spirit of God. Christ now gives gifts unto men through his Spirit—not exactly those of New Testament times, but such as the present age needs.

IV. CHRISTIANS SHOULD ACT ON THE KNOWLEGDE OF THE INDWELLING SPIRIT. 1. *Making use of his aid.* If we are Christ's, we are not left to our own resources. It is much to know that the gracious Spirit is with us to cheer and help. 2. *Not grieving him away.* We may grieve the Spirit (Eph. iv. 30). We are to remember that we are temples of the Holy Ghost, and therefore to keep the dwelling of God clear of all defilement (1 Cor. vi. 19).

Ver. 31.—*Sad memories.* The restored people are to be cleansed, renewed, and inspired. Yet they will still carry with them sad memories of their former sins.

I. THE PARDONED PENITENT CANNOT FORGET HIS PAST. The hardened sinner may do so; or at least he may carry the memory of his ill deeds with so light a heart that it will be no burden to him. While he thus bears the whole weight of his sin, its guilt, and its hurtful influence, he is scarcely conscious of it; but directly he begins to repent, the sin grows into an unbearable burden, and the sinner becomes keenly conscious of its continuous presence. He carries about with him the vision of his life's story written in letters of fire. Now, after forgiveness and renewal, the burden and

stain of guilt are gone. Still the sin is not undone. The restored penitent must feel that his was an evil past. God forgets his sin, but he cannot forget it himself.

II. THE MEMORY OF PAST SIN SHOULD NOT BECOME A HAMPERING BURDEN. It is possible that it may be so in a morbid conscience. But if God has forgiven our sin, we need not feel continuous distress at the thought of it. It is hard for the penitent ever to forgive himself. Yet he may do dishonour to the grace of God by dwelling too painfully on the memory of sin, so that he even forgets the wealth of pardoning love with which it has been covered. We need courage to take the grace of God, and to dare to go on our way rejoicing in the gladness which it is meant to afford us.

III. SAD MEMORIES MAY BE TURNED TO WHOLESOME USES. 1. *They may keep us humble.* Though restored now, we cannot forget the pit from which we have been digged. Let us, then, beware of falling back into it. "The burnt child dreads the fire." The soul that has fallen once should fear temptation for the future. 2. *They should make us grateful.* Every time we remember past sins we should also recollect the grace of God that has delivered us from them. The memory of the disease should call up the picture of the good Physician. Christ's love never shines so brightly as when it is seen against the background of man's sin. 3. *They should drive us to Christ.* Still do we need him. Away from him our souls are saddened with dark shadows of the horrible past. A gloom hangs over the earth when the light of Christ is withdrawn from it. Thus we are kept back from too much earthly elation that tends to frivolity. It may not be bad for us at times to be subdued to a sober sadness. Through the experience of it there may steal over the soul a sense of deep peace in God. Then we can see that Christ is our Light and the Light of the world. Life may be sunny still, but its light is from Christ.

IV. WE SHOULD BEWARE OF SOWING THE SEED OF SAD MEMORIES. This is a lesson for the young. During youth the memories that will cheer or sadden age are created and stored up for use in years to come. It is impossible to unwrite a soul's history. Then let those who are engaged on its early pages take heed what they set down upon them. It is possible to sow very carelessly seeds that will spring up in a most bitter harvest. If we would not have a gloomy old age of sad memories, let us spend our early years wisely and purely. Though God may forgive the follies of youth, old age will not forget them. In this sense, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Ver. 35.—*A new Eden.* The new heart (ver. 26) is to be followed by a new Eden. The outer world is to be changed when the inner world is renewed, and that sweet, fair Paradise, the dream of which hovers on the distant horizon of history, is to be once more seen on earth, when men are renewed in nature. The new Adam brings the new Eden. Consider some of its features.

I. LIFE. The *desolate* land becomes like the garden of Eden. It was desolate in death. Parched up and neglected, unwatered and untilled, the ruined country resembles the wilderness. Sin reduces the world to a wilderness. But Isaiah had prophesied that the wilderness should blossom like the rose (Isa. xxxv. 1). Heathenism is characterized by deadness of civilization. The vitality and energy of the world are found in Christendom. The life of the earthly paradise of culture, art, science, invention, manufacture, and commerce is concentrated in Christian lands. It is by no means all in the lands of Christian men. But it flourishes in an atmosphere of Christianity—some of the essential elements of which are (1) justice, (2) truth, (3) liberty, (4) human brotherhood, and (5) hopefulness. Without these five things progress languishes. They constitute the very air it breathes.

II. ORDER. The desolate place is in confusion; the garden is a well-ordered scene of life and growth. Its perfection is largely dependent on its perfect culture—well-kept paths, smooth lawns, flower-beds without weeds, trees pruned and trim. Christ brings order to a world of confusion. St. James wrote of the "perfect law of liberty"—for Christian freedom observes its own lofty law. The great secret of disorder is selfishness. Hence spring war and all strife and confusion. The great secret of order is love; for love involves sympathy, and sympathy inspires harmony, and harmony secures order. If human society is ever to become like an orderly garden, it will not be by means of the fierce contests of competition; nor owing to the rankling jealousy of class-differences between rich and poor, landlord and tenant,

employer and workpeople; it will be through the spread of the spirit of Christian brotherhood. Thus Christ will bring "on earth peace."

III. FRUITFULNESS. The fruit-trees covering the walls of a rich and fertile old English garden give to it great value. In the East a garden is often just an orchard. The garden of Eden is described as a fruit-growing place. The wilderness is barren; the garden is fruitful. Now, there are various fruits that grow out of the redeeming work of Christ. The best and choicest are spiritual—*i.e.* "the fruits of the Spirit." But society also reaps external good in the activities and charities of the Christian life. A living Church must be a boon to a neighbourhood—like a fruit-garden planted among weary men who sadly need its refreshing products.

IV. BEAUTY. Whenever the name of Eden is mentioned, we think of a picture of exceeding beauty. There are few more lovely sights than a cottage garden, with its quaint old-fashioned flowers—its airy columbines—its still, tall, white lilies—its sweet, rich roses.

> "How the rose of orient glow
> Mingles with the lily's snow!"

Alas! for the scenes of city life contrasted with this fresh vision of beauty! But Christ will plant a new Eden. He will bring beauty into faded lives, and joy to the old, weary earth. Christ does not only give grace; he adds glory. The beauty of the Lord is on his people. And this joy is not reserved for a future heaven of departed souls. The new Eden, like the old one, is to flourish on earth. Here Christ converts the wilderness into a garden.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 8—12.—*Promise of revival.* Ezekiel is inspired to foretell the confusion of the enemies of Israel who have brought about her calamities, and who delight in her humiliation, and in their contempt deride her sorrows. But this in itself is small consolation. And he adds predictions of the restoration, recovery, and revival of Israel after "her warfare is accomplished, and her iniquity is pardoned." The land and its inhabitants are naturally, as well as poetically, associated in his mind. The restored and rejoicing sons of Jacob till the soil which has been long neglected, and the soil rewards their labours with abundant fruitfulness. It is obvious that these prophetic descriptions have an application to the spiritual renovation of a repenting nation, to the Church of Christ under the genial influences of the Holy Spirit, and to the ransomed race of men in millennial prosperity.

I. THE AUTHOR OF THIS REVIVAL. "I," says the Lord, "am for you, and I will turn unto you." The Creator is the Source and Giver of all life, both in the natural and in the spiritual realm. If the wilderness is to be as the garden of God, it must be through the fall of showers from heaven, through dews of grace, through the Divine breath awakening the dead to life, through the sunshine from God's own countenance calling forth the vitality and the fragrance of the spiritual spring.

II. THE SCENE OF THIS REVIVAL. The land which has been so long desolate by reason of its occupation by hostile armies, and by reason of the deportation of its inhabitants, is visited by reviving mercy. The waste places, the dismantled and forsaken cities, are regarded in compassion and visited in mercy.

III. THE SUBJECTS OF THIS REVIVAL. These are living men, moral natures, capable of true life. "I will multiply men upon you;" "I will cause men to walk upon you." It is the men who make the land what it is, who till the soil, occupy the cities, garrison the fortresses, fill the temples, raise to heaven the free song of trust and praise. The return of the Hebrew captives to their inheritance, the land given to their fathers, was a joyful occasion, and was the earnest of good things to come. When God gives blessing, it is to living, spiritual, immortal natures that he gives it. He blesses his Church by raising up and consecrating to his service holy men and women, who in every position and vocation of life fulfil duty under a sacred impulse and with a noble aim.

IV. THE TOKENS OF THIS REVIVAL. Fruitfulness, increase, abundance,—these are the signs that God is working, that the winter is over and past, that the blossoms of

the spring, the promise of the year, have not been delusive. "Herein," says Christ, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit."

V. THE MEASURE OF REVIVAL. "I will do better unto you than at your beginnings." Such is the gracious assurance of the Almighty. Israel *had* known times of benediction and prosperity; she should know them again, only more abundantly. All past experience is transcended when the Lord stretches out his hand to bless.—T.

Vers. 20—24.—*Profanation and pity.* The conjunction is somewhat singular. Israel has profaned God's Name. Upon this suggestion the Lord, pitying his own Name, resolves to sanctify it, and to this end, and not for Israel's deserts, succours and restores his people. The several steps in this progress of thought should be attentively traced.

I. THE ISRAELITES HAVE PROFANED GOD'S NAME AMONG THE HEATHEN. They are universally known as the people of Jehovah. When exiled from their land, they are the objects of derision and contempt to the heathen who behold them, and who, despising them, despise also the Name of Jehovah.

II. THE LORD IS MOVED WITH PITY FOR HIS OWN NAME. The language, nay, the very thought, is remarkably bold. But especially as it is repeated, it must be taken as deliberate and intentional, and as corresponding with a wonderful and Divine, though but partially comprehensible, reality. His Name, his reputation, even among the heathen, is dear to him, and he deigns to be concerned when men speak lightly of his Name and blaspheme him openly. In human language, he is distressed at the evil things which are said of him among the enemies of his people.

III. THE PURPOSES OF GOD'S MERCY ARE NOT PROMPTED BY ANY DESERTS OF ISRAEL. "I do not this for your sake, O house of Israel." This is a principle which should ever be borne in mind in interpreting Old Testament history. The Hebrew writers are faithful, candid, and outspoken in describing the national character, in relating the actions of their countrymen. They were a rebellious and stiff-necked people. They had their good qualities, but their many and grievous sins are not extenuated. If God chose them as his peculiar people, it was not for any special excellence or meritoriousness in themselves. And when he restored them from captivity, he let it be understood that he did this not from a regard to their deserts.

IV. GOD'S PURPOSES OF MERCY TO ISRAEL ARE PROMPTED BY A REGARD TO HIS OWN NAME. He had made certain promises to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and those promises he must needs fulfil. He has intentions of mercy to mankind to be realized by means of the "children of promise," and he will not allow those intentions to be frustrated. He has his own faithfulness to vindicate, his own moral attributes to manifest. By his Name must be understood his character, especially as known among men; and, this being the case, it is not difficult to comprehend the meaning of "having pity on his holy Name."

V. PITY BECOMES PRACTICAL IN THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL TO THEIR OWN LAND, BY WHICH GOD'S NAME IS SANCTIFIED. There is dignity and even moral grandeur in the resolution which is expressed in this passage; it is felt to be worthy of him in whose lips it is placed by the prophet. When the great work of restoration is achieved, the nations who behold it see that the taunts and ridicule in which they have indulged are both foolish and blamable. Israel is proved to be the consecrated nation, preserved by God's wisdom and goodness as the instrument in effecting his purposes. The Lord God is seen to be, not powerless like the so-called gods of the nations, but omnipotent and just. His promises are vindicated as faithful. "I will sanctify my great Name and the nations shall know that I am the Lord."—T.

Vers. 25—27.—*Renewal.* It is observable that, in the view of the prophet, political revival and national restoration are associated with moral and spiritual improvement and renovation. No sooner has he uttered the prediction that the people of Israel shall be delivered from their captivity and be brought back into their own land, than, in a strain of singular beauty and eloquence, he proceeds to assure his countrymen of the Divine favour revealing itself in a deeper and more precious form. Jehovah promises to complete his work of mercy on behalf of his chosen people. They shall not only be rescued from the humiliation and reproach of banishment and servitude. They shall

be saved from the sin which was the occasion of their calamities. They shall experience a spiritual renovation—they shall be cleansed, renewed, and sanctified. The change shall be within the spiritual nature, and it shall manifest itself in the outer life, which shall be made a life of purity and of obedience. The figurative language in which this Divine work of renewal is described deserves careful attention; each several figure seems to present the transformation in a new light; taken together, they exhibit the most marvellous work of God in its true beauty and completeness.

I. GOD WILL GIVE FOR FOULNESS, PURITY. The defiling and offensive nature of sin is symbolized in Scripture by uncleanness of body. Of the sins with which Israel is especially charged, that of idolatry is perhaps the most prominent and the most debasing, bringing in its train a host of moral abominations. From idolatry and all its contaminations the consecrated people must needs be delivered, as a condition of all other blessing. With what simplicity and exquisite beauty is the gracious purpose of the Divine Purifier here expressed! "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." The moral purity of the Divine nature is imparted to the nature of man. The Holy Spirit produces the holy character, which expresses itself in the holy life. Much of the religious observance practised among the Hebrews was intended to convey the idea and to cultivate the practice of holiness. In the New Testament the greatest stress is laid upon this disposition and habit: "Be ye holy; for your Father in heaven is holy."

II. GOD WILL GIVE FOR HARDNESS OF HEART, A TENDERNESS AND SUSCEPTIBILITY. By hardness or obduracy we understand insensibility to Divine appeals, to rebukes and to promises—a character repelling all higher and holier motive. The stony heart is to be taken away, and replaced by a heart of flesh, *i.e.* a heart sensitive to Divine goodness and responsive to Divine appeals. The Israelites seem to have been peculiarly hard and stubborn in character. The word addressed to them, if it was to produce any impression, must needs have been "as a fire, and as a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." This was so throughout long periods of the national history. When God dealt with them in his mercy, he rendered their obdurate nature susceptible to gracious influences. Under the Christian dispensation, the softer features of the human character are brought out into prominence. The Spirit of Christ is a Spirit of meekness and gentleness. The heart of flesh which he imparts is susceptible to all that is good and winning, purifying and consolatory.

III. GOD WILL GIVE FOR OLDNESS, NEWNESS OF CHARACTER. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you." It is remarkable that we should find in Ezekiel's prophecies so striking an anticipation of the promises and privileges of Christianity. Living, as we do, under the new covenant, we are especially able to appreciate this gracious assurance. Old things pass away, all things become new, to him who is "in Christ Jesus," who is "a new creation." The oldness of the letter, the oldness of disobedience, are left behind; and spiritual newness opens up, in all its beauty and hopefulness, before us. "Newness of life" is the plainest mark of a Christianity more than nominal and formal.

IV. GOD WILL GIVE FOR ALIENATION, ACCEPTANCE. Those who had been afar off were to be brought nigh; those who had been estranged by sin were to be restored to fellowship; those who had been in rebellion were to be reconciled. The exiled should be brought home, and the cold oppression and scorn of the foreign conqueror should be exchanged for the acceptable services of the temple, and the smile of God upon his people and their inheritance. A marvellous emblem of the restoration of God's people to himself through Jesus Christ. For our Saviour has "made peace," so that those who accept his mediation, from having been alienated and at enmity, are reconciled, and enjoy the fellowship, the smile, the approval, of their God.

V. GOD WILL GIVE FOR ERROR, OBEDIENCE, SUBMISSION, AND CONFORMITY TO HIS WILL. "I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." To feel the force of this promise, we must remember how grievously the Israelites had erred, and how far they had strayed from the path of true and acceptable service. A renovation worthy of the name must include a thorough submission to the will which had been defied, a thorough and cordial performance of the service which had been neglected. As it was with the Israelites, so must it ever be

with all upon whom God has mercy. He puts his Spirit within them, and thus the life which would otherwise have been impracticable becomes the life deliberately chosen and consistently and perseveringly followed out.—T.

Ver. 31.—*Self-knowledge and self-loathing.* It is instructive to observe that this assertion that Israel shall remember and loathe past sin is placed immediately after the promise of renewal, purification, fruitfulness, and blessing. However this may seem out of place, a little reflection will convince us that the juxtaposition is both intentional and just. Men do not truly know the heinousness of their sin until they have been turned from it. It is the holy character to which moral evil is most repugnant.

I. SIN BLINDS MEN TO THEIR REAL CONDITION, AND FOSTERS UNDUE SELF-SATISFACTION. It is when men are offending most grievously that they are least sensible of their folly and guilt. They will not think, they will not suffer conscience to speak, they will not listen to any voice save the voice of passion and the voice of prejudice. They persuade themselves, and they allow themselves to be persuaded by others, that they are not to blame in following the dictates of "nature," in conforming to the usages of "society."

II. GOD'S CHASTISEMENTS AND GOD'S MERCIES AWAKEN MEN TO REFLECTION AND TO SELF-KNOWLEDGE. Israel came to herself when she had passed through the discipline of defeat, of captivity, of national humiliation. This was needed in order to open the eyes which were blind to her own state. Yet even this was not sufficient. Restoration and favour melted the heart to penitence and to gratitude. Sensible of God's mercies, she became sensible to her own faults. And it has often been observed that, *after* forgiveness has been obtained and reconciliation has been experienced, *after* Divine kindness has made its appeal to the better nature, then men's minds become alive to the magnitude and inexcusableness of the transgressions which have been committed. In the light of God's forbearance and loving-kindness, sin is seen to be what it really is.

III. SELF-KNOWLEDGE, BY REVEALING INIQUITY IN ITS TRUE LIGHT, LEADS TO SELF-LOATHING. Israel, remembering her evil ways, loathed herself in her own sight for her iniquities and for her abominations. Now that she was restored to her own territory, now that she entered again upon the enjoyments and privileges of her national life, she reflected upon her past. The guilt and folly of her idolatry, her unfaithfulness to Jehovah, her sensuality and pride, were apparent to her conscience. She saw herself in some measure as her God saw her. And at the sight she was filled with remorse and with self-loathing. What Christian is there who has not passed through an experience somewhat similar to this? There are times when we are comparatively insensible to the blemishes and imperfections of our own character. And there are times when God's mercy in Christ comes home to our hearts; and then we feel that to such a Being, who has so dealt with us, our sin must indeed be distressing and offensive, and we hate ourselves because we are not more what he would have us to be.

IV. THUS SELF-KNOWLEDGE LEADS TO REPENTANCE AND TO A BETTER LIFE. To repent of sin is to aspire after holiness. It is well that we should have a conscience of sin; but it is not well to rest in this. This should lead us to desire both to escape and to conquer sin in the future, and to resolve, by God's grace, that there shall not in that future be the same reason for self-reproach as in the past. Thus the pardon of sin and the victory over sin are made, by the appointment of Divine wisdom, the means of progress in the spiritual life towards moral perfection. Explain the mystery of sin, we cannot. But we are at liberty to remark how, in Christian experience, even the prevalence of sin is made the *occasion* of the manifestation of God's grace to his people, and how in this manner evil, ever remaining evil, is overruled for good. To love God and to loathe the sinful self are very closely associated in the Christian experience. It is to be desired by all of us that we may not be the victims of self-delusion; that we may see and feel our sin, our need of a Saviour; that all the motives of the gospel may be brought to bear upon our nature, with a view to our swifter progress in the Divine and holy life.—T.

Ver. 37.—*Inquiry of God.* Light is cast upon the function of prayer in the Divine economy by observing that in this passage explicit promises of blessing are first given

to Israel; and then, *afterwards*, it is affirmed that, for this blessing, God requires that his people should make supplication to him. The fact is that unless there be a basis for prayer in the explicit assurances of God, although it may be a natural and instinctive, it can hardly be a reasonable, exercise.

I. THE PROMISES OF GOD ARE AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE. The fact that explicit promises have been given is a fact familiar to every reader of Scripture. These promises are numerous and repeated. They have respect to the varied wants of men, and accordingly are characterized by a wonderful and very precious variety. Blessings so valuable and so desirable may well be sought with earnestness and importunity.

II. THE PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE ARE THE CONDITION OF THE OBTAINING OF GOD'S BLESSING. This affirmation rests upon the plain declarations of God's Word. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." It rests also upon reason. The best gifts of God are of such a nature that they cannot be bestowed irrespectively of the moral condition, the spiritual attitude of the recipient. They are not material, they are not conferred as by mechanical, physical law. God opens the heart that it may receive the benefits he waits to bestow.

III. THE PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE ARE THE OCCASION OF GOD'S CARRYING OUT HIS PURPOSES OF MERCY. We have looked at the matter from the human side, but it must be regarded also from the Divine side. The All-wise himself propounds his own terms; he carries out his intentions of mercy in the way that seems good to him. "For this moreover *will I* be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." For reasons which are only very partially within our powers of comprehension. this is the ordinance, the arrangement of Jehovah himself. We may be content to understand that which is within our range, to trace the bearing of prayer upon *our* religious interests, and to learn from experience its reasonableness as respects ourselves. And we must, in childlike faith, accept upon God's authority what is beyond our limited powers with any completeness to comprehend.

IV. THE PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE ARE REQUIRED AND COMMANDED BY HIM WHO IS THE GIVER OF THE PROMISES. With one hand our Father in heaven offers the gifts; with the other hand he delivers to his Church his written and express command. "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full;" "Pray without ceasing;" "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him!"—T.

Vers. 1—15.—*The material creation sharing in the fortunes of men.* Man has a many-sided nature. He is linked with the past history of angels and with the past history of the entire universe. His interests and fortunes are interwoven with the material creation and with the dynamic forces of nature. He has an interest in heaven and in hell. The intelligences of the universe are interested in him, and he is interested in them.

I. THE LAND OF CANAAN IS HONOURED BY A DIVINE COMMUNICATION. It is a reasonable conclusion that the main interest God felt in the mountains and hills of Palestine arose from their use as a home and storehouse for his people. Yet it is proper that we should regard God as finding a pleasure in the hills and valleys on account of their native beauty. They were the workmanship of his hand, and there is every reason why he should find pleasure in his creations. The long, past history of their internal structure was open to his eye, and the beauty of their clothing was to him a delight. But why should he despatch to these unconscious mountains a prophetic messenger? Without doubt, this was intended as a rebuke to the people who had grievously disregarded his messages. It was as if he said indirectly to the nation, "It is vain to speak longer to your stony ears. I turn away in sorrow, and address my message to the unconscious earth. The very mountains will give me better audience than you have done. If I speak to the dew, it will obey. If I speak to the fragrant soil, it will yield its fruit. If I speak to the mountains, they will put on verdure and beauty. But, alas! if I speak to the intelligent sons of Jacob, they turn deaf ears and rebellious wills to my gracious voice! O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord!" By such methods of rebuke God endeavours to bring conviction home to the consciences of the people.

II. THE LAND OF CANAAN WAS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN ISRAEL'S PAST RENOWN. This land had been specially selected by God as the most fitting scene for the training of the Hebrew nation. It was the glory of all lands, the envy of surrounding nations. Compared with the territory north, or east, or south, it was splendidly fertile, while its mountains made it a secure fortress. The diversity of hill and vale gave it peculiar beauty and served to exhilarate the mind. The mountain-peaks drew heavenward men's thoughts. According to the known law, that the physical features of a country mould unconsciously the character of the inhabitants, Canaan had been a benefit to the Jewish tribes. The land was a contrast to the soft, fertile loam of Egypt. The relaxing climate of Lower Egypt, together with the wondrous facility of obtaining large crops, made the people indolent and effeminate—impatient of arduous exertion. In Palestine a totally different condition of things prevailed. For the most part the operations of husbandry were severe. The sides of the hills required to be built in terraces in order to retain the soil. But climate and soil were congenial for almost every kind of fruit. It was a territory in which it was scarcely possible for one to grow rich; it was a territory eminently suitable for the development of hardy and industrious peasants. Especially the land was singularly dependent upon the periodic rainfall. For, devoid of rain and dew, the olives dropped withered and unripe, the vines were blighted, the young corn was shrivelled. Hence, in an eminent degree, the people hung in constant dependence on the good will of God. He held in his hand the helm of their prosperity.

III. THE LAND OF CANAAN HAD SHARED IN ISRAEL'S DISCOMFITURE AND SHAME. Frequent invasions on their borders had made their homes and crops insecure, and, without security for obtaining crops, men will not sow their fields. Frequent absence also, to serve on the battle-field, drew away the young men from quiet husbandry. Such losses in such a country soon became serious. A diminution in their produce left them unable and unwilling to pay tribute to their foreign conquerors, and this resulted in fresh invasion. Step by step the land went out of cultivation. The terraces on the hillsides were neglected. The people forgat God, and God withdrew the light of his favour. The mountain-slopes, denuded of soil, soon became bald, bleached rocks. The high reputation for fertility which the land had enjoyed was gone. Its excellence and glory departed. Sharon was no longer a fold for flocks. Carmel laid aside her bridal garments of floral beauty. Jackals and foxes and hyenas infested the land. With the degradation of the elect people came the degradation of the elect land.

IV. THE LAND OF CANAAN WAS ABOUT TO SHARE IN ISRAEL'S NEW PROSPERITY. 1. *In proportion to the infamy the land had endured was to be the fertility again to be enjoyed.* The prosperity should not only rise to the former level; it should greatly surpass it. The infallible promise was made directly to every part and branch of the territory. God had a tender regard for every mountain and valley, for every river and plain; each should be enriched and gladdened by his favouring smile. The shame of the heathen should be outbalanced by corresponding reputation and honour. On condition of the faithfulness of the people this revival of prosperity should be enduring. 2. *God speaks in language adapted to the age.* By any other mode of speech God could not have been understood; and in such a case he may as well not have spoken. As men were stimulated to great exertions by a sentiment of national jealousy, so, in accommodation to imperfect men, God speaks of himself as stirred to activity by the fire of jealousy. Such jealousy was only another form of considerate love. It had no respect to himself. It was a jealous regard for the good of Israel, a jealous desire to fulfil his ancient promises. 3. *These pledges of good were redeemed in the centuries which followed Israel's restoration.* The land was reclaimed from the ravages of wild beasts. Cities and villages were rebuilt. Many parts of Canaan became fertile as a garden. Confessedly, we feel a disappointment that the revival of prosperity was not more complete, nor more abiding. But this was due alone to the folly and guilt of the people. In every promise of God there underlies a moral condition. For him to give unmingled blessing to evil-doers would be a fresh evil and an encouragement to sin. The actual fortunes of Canaan, in the later centuries, prove the faithfulness of God and the fickleness of the people.—D.

Vers. 16—32.—*A vision of the true golden age.* Up to this point God had been

revealing more clearly his active righteousness to Israel; and *this* with a view to arouse their drugged and drowsy consciences. The equity and justice of his sceptre had been vividly portrayed. The keen edge of his judicial sword had been felt. Some movements of better feeling in the exiles were apparent. And now God hastens to foster penitential sentiments with a promise of generous kindness. Further revelations of his great nature are made. The excellence of his grace is unveiled to the opening eye of the penitents. Stupendous condescension is shown. God himself will undertake the renovation of human nature. He will go down to the very root of the evil. He will transform the innermost principles in the minds of the people, and so qualify them for national restoration and national prosperity. And he will do this mainly that he may set before the world the wealth of goodness and kindness which constitutes his glory. "I do this for my holy Name's sake, saith the Lord."

I. ISRAEL'S ARRAIGNMENT. 1. *The gravamen of the accusation is idolatry.* Than idolatry, no greater affront can be put upon God, no greater evil can be wrought. God was deposed from his rightful throne, and senseless matter elevated into his place. The perfect will of God was set aside for the vain fancies of wicked men. The devil was preferred to Jehovah. 2. *Idolatry was a system of active vice.* It did not represent merely a change of belief; it was the enthronement and deification of vice. Public sanction was given to lust and unchastity. The marriage-tie was dissolved. The temple of God was desecrated with animal lust. The barbarous rites of idolatrous worship served to crush every tender feeling and to make men fiends. Wrong soon lost its hideous features in the eyes of men. They became inhuman, cruel, quarrelsome, murderous. Human life lost its sanctity, and the land was stained with blood. 3. *Idolatry's fruits were most offensive to God.* In order to convey to men an approximate idea of this offensiveness, God was compelled to borrow an illustration from the most loathsome thing familiar to men. As if he had said, "Picture to yourselves the thing most repulsive to your senses; *this* thing will feebly convey the idea of disgust I feel towards this monstrous crime." A common dung-hill is fragrance itself compared with the moral foulness of idolatry; and dead to every virtuous instinct must be the man who can endure it.

II. ISRAEL'S ARRAIGNMENT LED TO SEVEREST PENALTY. 1. *A discharge of God's anger.* "*I poured out my fury upon them.*" The long-gathering storm of just indignation burst upon them as torrents from a broken reservoir. This is God's own account of his conduct, and he speaks, as usual, after the manner of a man. The violent anger of a man under a strong sense of injury has its correspondence in God, save that in God it is filled with the element of righteousness, and is in exact proportion to the sinner's deserts. 2. *It embraced the dissolution of the covenant.* The covenant made with Abraham and renewed with the Israelites was founded on a moral condition. That condition had been broken and abandoned by the nation; hence God publicly testified that he was no longer bound. The land of Canaan ceased to be held by Divine covenant; and, as the result of the broken compact, the Assyrians took possession. Pledges and contracts between God and man, wantonly violated, are surely followed by gravest disaster. This should teach all men the reality and the value of righteousness. 3. *The penalty*, though severe, was strictly equitable. "According to their doings I judged them." The fullest equity in God's dealings is guaranteed (1) by the qualities of his nature and (2) by the well-being of all the moral intelligences of his kingdom. Every act of loving obedience shall be rewarded. Every deed of rebellion shall be punished according to the most equitable scale. And in this category is registered every secret design, as well as every overt deed.

III. THIS MANIFESTATION OF JUSTICE OVERSHADOWED THE BENIGNANT NATURE OF GOD. "They profaned my holy Name." It is a great responsibility to bear the Name of God—a great responsibility to belong to his kingdom. We carry his reputation in our hands. Mankind will judge him by what they see in us. If they discover in us selfishness, avarice, lust, they will conclude that our God is not over-righteous. If we, for our sins, are chastised, men will shrink from serving such a Master. Such was the case in the olden time among all the peoples that dwelt in the vicinity of Palestine. They said contemptuously, "This Jehovah, who conquered Canaan for his people, was not able to retain it for them! Or else, he is a God easily offended! He chooses a nation for his favour one day, and casts it off on the morrow! Or else, his justice is so

severe that we prefer to keep aloof from him!" Such were the judgments of men. But this was the result of ignorance. This was derogatory to God. This prejudiced the public mind against just conceptions of God. Now, it had been God's high design to unveil gradually to mankind all the fulness of his nature—his strong affection, the riches of his mercy, his self-sacrificing grace. Did men but know him thoroughly, one great hindrance to confidence and obedience would be removed. Most surely he deserves our allegiance; he is infinitely worthy of our trust. Therefore God had pity upon his Name; for his Name is the sum-total of his goodness. Men were suffering, because they did not know God—were misled by erroneous views of his character. Hence God resolved to adopt another plan—to make a grand experiment. He will make a new covenant with the people, and will write his laws on the tablet of their hearts. He will yet conquer their rebellions with his abounding grace.

IV. THE GRAND EXPERIMENT OF KINDNESS; viz. a gracious renewal of human nature. 1. *The first step is cleansing.* "From all your idols will I cleanse you." A disposition of repentance was already apparent. Many were beginning to ask how deliverance could be obtained; and, before they asked, the remedy is announced. God will undertake to purge out the virus of disease, and if he undertakes it, the change will be effectual. He will go to the root of the matter. The love of idols shall be rooted out of the heart; and, the root being killed, all the fruits will disappear. The instrument to be employed is the Truth—the revelation of Divine mercy. This is the "clean water" mentioned. To the same effect David declared, "The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." And Jesus the Christ affirmed, "Now ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you." 2. *The next step is heart-renovation.* "A new heart also will I give you." By the mystic power of his grace God produces gradually a complete change in the moral principles of every penitent man. New light enters the mind. Sin is seen in its loathsomeness. A gracious influence from heaven softens the dispositions of the heart. Feeling becomes tender. The tastes cluster round nobler objects. God is seen to be supremely good, and new affections begin to entwine round him. Old habits of evil are dissevered. New inclinations and aspirations are engendered. Step by step the man rises out of his dead self into a new life. "Old things pass away, and all things" within him "become new." 3. *A further step is the indwelling of God's Spirit in the man.* This is an anticipation of the new dispensation, more fully developed at Pentecost; this is the highest, noblest gift God can impart. In a word, this is spiritual evolution. On Adam God breathed, and he "became a living soul." But this is a new departure. The Spirit of God finds an entrance into the human soul, and works therein a new creation. All the dispositions of God are gradually reproduced. The man learns to think as God thinks, to feel as God feels, to love as God loves, to act as God acts. Then God's will is done, and God's image is reflected in the man as a face is reflected in a mirror. 4. *A further step is national restoration.* The man who truly loves God learns to love his fellow-man; and this bond of mutual love was the very thing wanted to weld the Hebrews into a nation. A people can safely be trusted with national prosperity only when they are loyal to God. The whole land of Palestine was a kind of enlarged temple, and only a consecrated people are fitted for a consecrated place. The old covenant, in its essential principles was to be restored. God would give himself to the people; they would give themselves up to him. 5. *Material prosperity.* "I will call for the corn, and will increase it." Soul-prosperity is the foundation; temporal fortune is the superstructure. "All things are ours, if we are Christ's." "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." In Palestine the state of the harvest-field was a mirror in which men saw the smile or the frown of God. To obedient Jews, land-fertility was secured by an inviolable pledge of Jehovah. The windows of heaven were opened; the vines were embellished with splendid clusters; the very mountains seemed to send out rills of oil from the olive-groves.

V. THE FINAL AIM OF THIS STUPENDOUS CHANGE; viz. to reveal God's Name. In other words, to make known to the world his wealth of goodness. That the purpose and aim of Jehovah in this grand experiment might be made clear, it is stated both positively and negatively. "Not for your sakes do I this," saith God, "but for my holy Name's sake." A full and accurate knowledge of God is hope and inspiration to men. If only the state of feeling in a man's heart be right, then in proportion as God

is known, he will be admired, trusted, loved, served. If the soil of the heart be broken up and pulverized, the knowledge of God, like living seed, will grow and flourish and bear a rich harvest of fruit. "They that know thy Name will put their trust in thee." This heart-knowledge of God brings eternal life. Misunderstanding of God brings fear, bondage, misery, hell. The glory of God and the good of men are twin-purposes —two sides of the same coin. God's will is man's salvation. As we know God experimentally, we aspire to be like God, we yearn to do his will, heaven is begun within.—D.

Vers. 32—38.—*Prosperity suspended on human prayer.* In the previous verses God has disclosed a new scheme of spiritual tactics. He will lay siege to man's heart with the artillery of love. He will touch and melt his will. He will gently, yet powerfully, dispose him to obedience. Yet God will not reduce man to a machine. He will not coerce his will. Men shall not become passive instruments under God's hand. There shall be place for human thought, human choice, human effort. "I will yet be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

I. GOD'S GIFTS ARE BESTOWED IN A DEFINITE ORDER. "Order is heaven's first law." In nature and in human nature, God works from the centre outwards. Jerusalem was such a centre. The home is a centre. Man's soul is a centre—a centre for himself, his family, his fortunes, his contemporary society. 1. *Soul-cleansing is the root-blessing.* This embraces cleansing from the love of sin, the power of sin, the stain and curse of sin. The animal part of our nature is kept in subjection to the spiritual. The old fountain of evil is cleansed. The real man no longer lives in the cellar and scullery of his nature; he prefers now to live and move in the capacious rooms above—in the great halls of reason and conscience. 2. *A better social life.* They "shall dwell in the cities." It is easier to live a godly life in a garden than in a city, but that sequestered life would be narrow and poor and weak. In the city temptations and hindrances abound; and he who surmounts them is raised into a higher plane of life. Men of pure and lofty tastes constitute a society that is fruitful in goodness. They shall be cemented in strong and vital ties for mutual security and mutual help. 3. *Agricultural fertility.* The Jews were devoted to the pursuits of husbandry; hence fertility in the field was their greatest earthly prosperity. This fertility would be the more highly prized because of its contrast with recent desolation. *That* which had been like a desert was to be prolific and beauteous as the virgin soil of Eden. The last vestige of the curse was to vanish. With the smallest measure of labour shall come the largest measure of increase. 4. *Growing population.* An unmistakable mark of national prosperity is increase of men. The stalwart and athletic youth would not be slain on the battle-plain, nor decimated by pestilence, nor destroyed by ruinous vice. Just as the streets of Jerusalem were crowded with flocks in the time of the Passover, brought thither for the Paschal feast, so should the towns and villages teem with hale and sinewy men. "I will increase them with men like a flock." 5. *Renown among the neighbouring nations.* "The heathen shall know" that Jehovah is the real Source of prosperity. They had learnt to think of him as an austere Ruler, or as indifferent respecting his people's weal. Truer thoughts of God and of God's goodness shall displace the old ideas. They shall understand God's high designs, and shall admire and praise. To serve such a God will be counted true honour.

II. GOD'S GIFTS ARE PLEDGED BY AN INFALLIBLE PROMISE. The advantages of making this prosperity a matter of promise was manifold. 1. *It would sustain their hope.* In their exiled state, they were in danger of yielding to sullen despair. Adversity had demoralized them. They had well-nigh lost heart. 2. *It would encourage wise effort.* The bright prospect of a golden age would stimulate them to exertion. They could the better bear the ills of banishment when they knew these were only for a time. They would more bravely face the toils of another journey homeward when they knew what splendid prosperity was guaranteed. 3. *It would more clearly unfold God's moral intention in their adversity.* That defeat and its consequent hardships were no mere caprices on God's part. Nor had he wholly abandoned them. The judgment, though severe, was disciplinary. It was moral medicine, destined to produce better health. Hence a window was opened through which they gained an insight into God's heart. 4. *The promise gave them a grasp upon God.*

They well knew his faithfulness. No word of his had ever failed, nor ever would. If he had fulfilled his threats of evil, much more would he fulfil his promises of good.

III. GOD'S GIFTS ARE SUSPENDED UPON HUMAN PRAYER. 1. *This was an honour conferred upon men.* God takes imperfect men into partnership with himself. Great though his power may be, he loves to ally himself with men, so that he may inspire them with a sacred ambition, and lift them to a higher level of life. He would have us to feel a responsibility respecting the welfare of mankind. This expands both mind and heart. 2. *Prayer itself is salutary.* No other occupation of the human mind is so salutary. There is hope for the lowest sunk, if he has begun to pray. Prayer generates humility. It dissolves self-trust and fosters trust in God. It enhances the value of God's gifts if we have to ask for them. Prayer serves to purify and elevate the nobler emotions. It brings our wills into submission to the Eternal Will. 3. *The most successful prayer is united prayer.* The request must be made "by the house of Israel." This union of hearts in prayer promotes sympathy, brotherly love, concord, co-operation. Social piety is fostered. The whole people is prepared for the blessing. The furrows are opened to receive the heavenly rain. This announcement forecasts *that* of the New Testament—that if "two shall agree on earth as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."—D.

Vers. 1—15.—*Encouragement in exile.* Israel was in a very deplorable condition. It was away from its native land, in the power and in the service of the enemy; its own "inheritance" was peopled by a poor and weak remnant; it was the prey and the butt of the merciless mocker; its fortunes were low, its heart was sad indeed; it could not sing the Lord's song in such a strange land as that in which it was exiled. But after words of condemnation comes the language of hope. The prophet of God is commissioned to break into their gloom with some beams of promise. Here are gracious words from his mouth; here is a prophecy delivered to "the mountains of Israel," which may well have filled the hearts of the people of God with great joy and gladness. The lessons we glean from the passage (vers. 1—15) are—

I. THAT SOMETHING IS LEFT US WHEN AN ENEMY HAS DONE HIS WORST. As Matthew Henry well remarks, the mountains, the hills, the rivers, and the valleys, the desolate wastes and the forsaken cities (ver. 4) "remained to be spoken to, . . . these the Chaldeans could not carry away with them." They might deport and depopulate, but they could not destroy the land which Jehovah had given to his people. Still the mountains stood, and still the rivers ran, and still the valleys stretched beneath the sun and received the rains of heaven. 1. Our human enemy may do much to harm us, but his power is very limited after all. At the most and the worst, he can but "kill the body; after that he hath no more that he can do." He cannot kill the soul; he cannot take away faith, or love, or peace, or hope from the human heart; he cannot rob us of our real inheritance. 2. Or if our *spiritual* enemy injures us in a more deadly way than the tyrant or the persecutor can do; if he gain dominion over us and rob us of our rectitude, and so of our peace and rest in God; even then there remains a spiritual nature which is capable of redemption; the *soil* remains, which, sown again with the good seed of the kingdom, may yet bring forth very precious fruit.

II. THAT THE TENDENCY OF SIN IS TO A DANGEROUS EXTREME. Edom and other heathen lands carried their enmity and their cruelty so far that they brought down upon themselves the righteous anger of God. "*Because* they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side," etc. (ver. 3), "*therefore*, thus saith the Lord, surely in the fire," etc. (ver. 5). These persecuting nations had succeeded only too well; they had filled their hands with spoil, and their souls with spiteful pleasure (ver. 5); and the extremity to which they pushed their triumph led to their discomfiture. Such is sin everywhere. It leads to extravagance and excess; to a most guilty and ruinous indulgence; or to a high-handed arrogance and blasphemy which call forth the deep displeasure of the righteous God, and bring down the strong, stern hand of judgment. When we once give way to temptation, of whatever kind it be, we enter a path which leads and lures us on much further than we at first meant to go; and the end of it is condemnation and doom.

III. THAT GOD PITIES HIS PEOPLE, THOUGH THEY SUFFER AT HIS OWN HAND. It

was God who caused the children of Israel to lose their heritage and to be carried away as they were. Their sorrows were the penalty of their sin; it was the hand of the Lord that was laid upon them. Yet their distressing condition called forth the Divine compassion. It was in mercy, in true pity, that he saw them "bearing the shame of the heathen" (ver. 6; see ver. 15). Even though it is in virtue of God's own righteous laws that we "are minished and brought low," that we suffer in the flesh or in the spirit, in circumstance or in soul, as the consequence of our wrong-doing, even then, in our straits and in our misery, in our bondage and in our degradation, we are the objects of Divine compassion. God likes not to see his children suffer and "bear shame" as they do. And he sends the messenger of mercy that bids us rise from our wretchedness and ruin and return unto himself.

IV. THAT EVERYTHING MAY BE RECOVERED WHEN GOD IS ON OUR SIDE. (Vers. 8—15.) When God says, "I am for you, and I will turn unto you," what is there that we may not hope for? Then the land of Israel might look to be retilled and resown, to yield its fruit as in the best days that were; to be repeopled by those who had a right to walk upon its hills and to cultivate its villages; it should no longer be a grave for the dead, but a home for the living. And when we turn in penitence and in faith to God, and he turns in mercy and in grace to us, what is there that *we* may not hope for? What glorious spiritual restoration is within our reach!—the *peace* which no earthly good can either give or take away: the *joy* which abides and which blesses while it lasts; the *excellency* of character and of life which makes us take rank with the children of God everywhere; the *hope* which is full of immortality.—C.

Vers. 16—21.—*God's Name and ours.* The most striking thought contained in these words is God's regard for the honour of his own Name. But there are two truths which claim attention.

I. TWO THINGS WHICH INCUR HIS HIGH DISPLEASURE. The pouring out of his "fury" is, of course, language which is accommodated to our human feelings; but it speaks of the Divine displeasure existing in a very high degree; and the two evils which excite it are: 1. *Perverted piety;* the giving to another the glory due to himself: idolatry (ver. 18). 2. *Inhumanity.* "They had shed blood upon the land" (ver. 18). The wanton taking of human life is the darkest and saddest form of cruelty; but it is by no means the only one which meets the severe rebuke of God. All forms of unkindness or of wrong, by which men's circumstances are reduced or their spirits are wounded, call down his reproach and bear their penalty.

II. ONE ESPECIAL FORM OF PENALTY. God "scattered" the Israelites; he caused them to be "dispersed through the countries" (ver. 19). The evil which they suffered in Babylon was negative rather than positive. They were not ill treated there. The misery of it lay in its unhomeliness. They were far from their own land—from Mount Zion and its glorious temple, from the happy services and holy institutions which made their childhood and their youth what they were; they were exiles, dwelling in "a strange land." This is the constant penalty of sin. It causes us to dwell afar off from God; we lose our sense of nearness to him; we are in no spiritual home; we are in the hand and in the land of the enemy. It is not that earth is far from heaven; it is that sin is far from righteousness; it is that the disloyal subject, the unfilial child, is far from his gracious Sovereign, far from his heavenly Father.

III. GOD'S SOLICITUDE CONCERNING HIS NAME. "They profaned my holy Name" (ver. 20); "I had pity for my holy Name" (ver. 21). Why should God be concerned thus "for his Name"? Knowing, as we do, that God is love, and that he lives not for himself, but for the good of his universe, we cannot believe that this Divine solicitude has any selfishness at the root of it. We conclude that its explanation is in the fact that *it is of vital consequence to the world* that he should be rightly regarded and truly honoured. It is so in both aspects, affirmative and negative. 1. It is a boundless blessing when God is known and understood; when, therefore, he is honoured and obeyed; and when, therefore, all the priceless blessings of obedience are secured. 2. It is an immeasurable evil when God is misrepresented and misunderstood; when his Name is profaned, and men think of him as he would not be thought of; when his Name is associated with weakness, or with indifference, or with injustice, or with any kind of wrong. Then comes irreverence, and all the long train of evils that accompany it

—irreligion, disobedience, rebellion, degradation, ruin, death. We may well pray, "Hallowed be thy Name;" for as men speak of God, and as they think of him and know him, so will they order their lives and construct their character and choose their destiny. We ought, similarly, to be concerned about our name. Not that it is the part of a wise man to covet notoriety; that is weakness rather than wisdom. To *wish* to be notorious is simply selfish, and to *be* notorious is to stand on the same ground with many of the very worst men that ever strove and sinned. But we *should* be concerned so to live that our name, however far it may go, may be associated with all that is pure and good and wise; that such influence as God gives us to exert may all go into the right scale; that whenever and wherever we do speak or strike, we may speak what is true and strike for justice and humanity; that the issue of our lives shall be a brave and faithful witness for God, for the kingdom of Jesus Christ; that no man shall find a shelter for anything that is base or immoral behind our name; that many men may walk more steadily along the path of life or work more devotedly in the fields of usefulness because our name lends some strength to virtue and to holy service.—C.

Vers. 26—28.—*The three elements of piety.* The Israelites were "profaning the Name" of Jehovah in the lands through which they were dispersed. But this could not be permitted to remain. For the sake of his own Divine Name, the sacredness of which was of such vital moment to mankind (see previous homily), God would work a gracious revolution (vers. 21—23). And what he would do is this: 1. He would work within their hearts an entire change of thought and feeling, removing their strong stubbornness and replacing it with a childlike sensibility. 2. He would thus lead them to live in purity and uprightness before the eyes of those among whom they dwelt. Thus would he magnify his holy Name. 3. Then he would restore them to the old relation which they had forfeited by their sin; they should be again his people, and he would be their God, dwelling among them and ruling over them in peace and righteousness. We have here the three constantly recurring elements of true piety.

I. INWARD RENEWAL. (Ver. 26.) Consisting of: 1. *Sensibility* taking the place of indifference or stubborn rebelliousness. Instead of the "stony heart" is the "heart of flesh;" instead of an utter, brutish disregard of Divine claims or a perverse and froward determination to reject them, is the "new heart," the "new spirit" of openness of mind, willingness which ends in eagerness to learn of God, responsiveness of feeling when he speaks, tenderness of conscience under the spoken truth of Christ. 2. *Humility* taking the place of pride or careless unconcern; a sense of past sin and of present unworthiness; the inward conviction that God has not been remembered, reverenced, served, trusted, as he should have been, and that life has been stained with many errors, faults, shortcomings, transgressions; a spirit of true penitence and shame; a voice, not loud but deep, says within the soul, "I have sinned." 3. *Consecration* instead of selfishness. The heart turns away from selfishness and from worldliness toward God, toward the Divine Redeemer, whom it receives gladly and fully as the Saviour of the soul, as the Sovereign of the life.

II. OUTWARD RECTITUDE. "I will cause you to walk in my statutes," etc. (ver. 27). The obedience which springs from mere dread of penalty is of very small account; but that which proceeds from a loyal and a loving heart is worth everything. The Divine Son, who was also a Servant, could say, "I delight to do thy will; . . . thy Law is within my heart." And when the new spirit or the new heart is within us, we can speak in the same strain. Our piety passes, with perfect naturalness, from the reverent thought to the right word; from the grateful feeling to the upright action, from the consecrated spirit to the devoted and useful life. We obey God's word because we honour himself; we keep the commandments of Christ because we love our Lord (John xiv. 15, 21, 23). If the Spirit of God be in us we shall bring forth the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22, 23). Of the commandments of Christ, to which, by his own words or by those of his apostles, he has attached the greatest weight, as indispensable to the Christian life and as the condition of his acceptance, we must include purity, truthfulness, sobriety, honesty, reverence, love—the love which forbears, which pities, which succours in time of need.

III. HEAVENLY INTERCOURSE. (Ver. 28.) While still inhabitants of earth, our

citizenship is to be in heaven (see Phil. iii. 20). God is to be our God, and we are to be his people. All human and earthly relationships are to find their highest and best illustration in those which are "in the heavens," which are spiritual and eternal. Communion between ourselves and our Father in heaven is to be common and constant—a daily, an hourly incident through all our life and in all our circumstances and conditions. Far below and far above all other things, we are to be the children and the heirs of God, we are to be the servants of Jesus Christ, we are to bear witness to his truth, we are to promote the coming of his kingdom on the earth.—C.

Vers. 33—37.—*The period of spiritual prosperity.* The promised restoration and prosperity of Israel very fitly portrays the condition of spiritual well-being in the Church of Christ. It is marked by four things.

I. SPIRITUAL STABILITY. "I will cause you to *dwell in the cities*" (ver. 33). They were not to be as travellers who are always moving, sleeping beneath the trees or the stars, or as men that pitch their tents for a few days and pass on; they should "dwell in the cities." It is one sign of a healthy moral condition when we reach some permanency of principle and of feeling; when we are not "driven with the wind and tossed," but abide where we are, dwelling in the strong cities of assured conviction, of peace, of sacred joy, of blessed hope. It is the man who has learnt much of God and has attained to no small measure of heavenly wisdom whom we know where to find, on whose constancy we may depend, who is "steadfast and immovable."

II. FRUITFUL ENERGY. "The wastes shall be builded, and the desolate land shall be tilled" (vers. 33, 34). Before the Churches of Christ there lie sad and desolate wastes—souls that are in ruins and urgently need to be restored; large stretches of manhood that are now uncultivated, but that would yield a very precious harvest if only the seed of heavenly truth were sown. The great work to which these Churches should have addressed themselves with utmost earnestness and zeal is the work of human restoration, of sacred culture. The fields lie fallow and are barren; the land is desolate; mankind is not yielding its fruit, though there are boundless capacities slumbering in the soil. But when the breath of Divine inspiration is felt by the Church, and the pulse of a Divine life is beating within it, then does it go forward in the fulness of its faithfulness and its pity, and the wastes are builded and the land is tilled.

III. IMPRESSIVENESS AND INFLUENCE. (Vers. 35, 36.) A Christian Church may not be composed of those whose outward behaviour contrasts greatly with what it once was; for its members may be those who have "been with Christ from the beginning." Nevertheless, it ought to be a distinctively and unmistakably holy community; a society of men and women who are recognized by "all that pass by" as those that love righteousness and hate iniquity; as those that are seriously and earnestly endeavouring to translate the will of Christ into their daily and their public life; as those whose whole conduct is governed by Christian principle; as those who are intent upon the elevation of their country and of their race, whatever sacrifice of time, or money, or strength it may require to accomplish it. Then would the great Name of Jesus Christ be magnified, and men would know that he was the Lord, the Lord of all power and grace.

IV. PRAYERFULNESS. (Ver. 37.) God will have his children near to him in reverential and grateful thought, and he desires that they ask him for the help and the blessings they need at his hand. He will "be inquired of." As soon as we reach a point where we begin to think of independence, we are in spiritual danger. The wise, safe, prosperous condition, both of the individual and of the Church, is that of constant nearness to God and a deep sense of dependence upon him. The upward look and the earnest prayer become us well; and they not only *become us*, but they *secure for us* the responsive bounty and blessing of God.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

This chapter embraces, in its earlier section (vers. 1—14), the concluding portion of the "word of God" begun at ch. xxxvi. 16; in its later section (vers. 15—28), an additional "word," to which the former naturally leads. The earlier, under the figure of a resurrection of dry bones, beheld by the prophet in vision, describes the political and religious reawakening of Israel; in the later is depicted, by means of a symbolic action, the reunion of its two branches. The first divides itself into two parts—the vision (vers. 1—10) and its interpretation (vers. 11—14). The vision was to all appearance designed to meet the objections the preceding picture of Israel's future glory might naturally be expected to call forth. It was true that in the past Israel had often suffered a decline in her national life, and as often experienced a revival. But with the fall of her capital, the burning of her temple, the slaughter of her people, and the expatriation of her nobles, her life was henceforth extinct; and to speak of returning prosperity to her in such a condition was like talking of the restoration of vitality to withered bones. Besides, the exiles were, comparatively speaking, only a handful, and to picture Judah's waste cities as being filled with flocks of men was like mocking the dejected with hopes certain to be dashed to the ground. The Exposition will show how the vision was fitted to dispel such despondent reflections. Yet diversity of sentiment prevails as to whether the vision was intended to predict an actual resurrection of the physically dead at the end of time, or merely to symbolize an ideal resurrection of Israel, then nationally dead.

1. The view, that *what the prophet beheld in vision was the final resurrection of mankind*, though favoured by Jerome, Calovius, and Kliefoth, must be abandoned, not because the doctrine of a general resurrection would not have been a powerful consolation to the pious-hearted in Israel, or because that doctrine was not then known, but because, in the prophet's own explanation, the bones are declared to be those, not of the whole family of man, but merely of the house of Israel. At the same time, those interpreters are right who, like Hengstenberg, Keil, and Plumptre, hold that, even if the doctrine of a general resurrection had not been current in Ezekiel's time, this vision was enough to call it into existence, and even to lend strong probability to its truth.

2. Accordingly, the view is commonly preferred that, while an objective reality to the prophet's mind, and by no means a mere rhetorical garb for its conceptions, *the vision was designed as a symbolic representation of Israel's resuscitation;* though here again opinions diverge both as to what formed the mental background for the prophet's use of such a symbol, and as to how it served to suggest the thought of Israel's revival. While some, like Jerome and Hengstenberg, as above indicated, regard "the doctrine of the proper resurrection" as "the presupposition of the expanded figurative representation," others, with Hävernick, find its historical basis in such instances of raising from the dead as were performed by Elijah and Elisha, and perhaps also in such passages as Isa. xxvi. 19. If Smend thinks the vision was intended to assist Israel merely by suggesting that "the unbelievable might happen," and Hävernick that it was designed to inspire hope by presenting to the mind a lively picture of the creative, life-giving power of God, "which can raise even dead bones to life again," Ewald finds its chief power to console in the thought "that the nation or individual which does not despair of the Divine Spirit will not be forsaken of this Spirit in any situation, but will always be borne on by it to new life."

Ver. 1.—**The hand of the Lord was upon me.** The absence of the customary "and" (comp. ch. i. 1, 3; iii. 14, 22), wanting only once again (ch. xl. 1), appears to indicate something extraordinary and unusual in the prophet's experience. In the words of Ewald, "such a never-beheld sight one sees freely (by itself) in a moment of higher inspiration or never;" and that in this whole vision the prophet was the subject of a special and

intensified inspiration is evident, not alone from the contents of the vision, but also from the language in which it is recorded. **And carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord.** So the Vulgate and Hitzig—a translation which Smend thinks might be justified by an appeal to ch. xi. 24, in which the similar phrase, "Spirit of God (*Elohim*)," occurs; though, with Grotius, Hävernick, Keil, and others, he prefers the rendering of the LXX., "And Jehovah carried me out in the Spirit." The Revised Version combines the two thus: "And he carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord." Keil suggests that the words, "of God," in ch. xi. 24, were omitted here because of the word "Jehovah" immediately following. **And set me down in the midst of the valley.** As the article indicates, the valley in the neighbourhood of Tel-Abib, where the prophet received his first instructions concerning his mission (ch. iii. 22); although Hengstenberg holds, wrongly we think, that "the valley here has nothing to do with the valley in ch. iii. 22." **Which** (literally, *and it*) **was full of bones**; *i.e.* of men who had been slaughtered there (ver. 9; comp. ch. xxxix. 11), and whose corpses had been left unburied upon the face of the plain (ver. 3), so that they were seen by the prophet. Whether these bones were actually in the valley, or merely formed part of the vision, can only be conjectured, though the latter opinion seems the more probable. At the same time, such a plain as is here depicted may well have been a battle-ground on which Assyrian and Chaldean armies had often met.

Ver. 2.—**And he caused me to pass by them round about.** Not over, as Keil, Kliefoth, and Plumptre translate, but round about them, so as to view them from every side. The result of the prophet's inspection of the bones was to excite within him a feeling of surprise which expressed itself in a twofold **behold**; the first occasioned by a contemplation of their number, **very many**, and their situation, **in the open valley**, literally, *upon the face of the valley*; i.e. not underground, where they could not have been seen, but upon the surface of the soil, and not piled up in heaps, but scattered over the ground; and the second by a discernment of their condition as **very dry**, so bleached and withered as to foreclose, not the possibility alone, but also the thought of their resuscitation.

Ver. 3.—**Son of man, can these bones live?** Whether or not this question was directed, as Plumptre surmises, to meet despairing thoughts which had arisen in the prophet's own mind, it seems reasonable to hold, with Hävernick, that the question was addressed to him as representing "over against God the people, and certainly as to this point the natural and purely human consciousness of the same," to which **Israel's restoration** appeared as unlikely an occurrence as the reanimation of the withered bones that lay around. The extreme improbability, if not absolute impossibility, of the occurrence, at least to human reason and power, is perhaps pointed at in the designation "Son of man" here given to the prophet. The prophet's answer, **O Lord God, thou knowest**, is not to be interpreted as proving that to the prophet hitherto the thought of a resurrection had been unfamiliar, if not completely absent, or as giving a direct reply either affirmative or negative to the question proposed to him, but merely as expressing the prophet's sense of the greatness of the wonder suggested to his mind, with perhaps a latent acknowledgment that God alone had the power by which such a wonder could, and therefore alone also the knowledge whether it would, be accomplished (comp. Rev. vii. 14).

Ver. 4.—**Prophesy upon** (or, *over*) **these bones.** This instruction—which shows Jehovah regarded the prophet's answer as equivalent to an admission that the revivification of the bones lay within his (Jehovah's) power—was not a mere command to predict, as in ch. vi. 2 and xi. 4, but an injunction to utter the Divine word through which the miracle (of creation, as it really was) should be performed. "The significance of the command lies in the fact that it taught the prophet that he was himself to be instrumental in the great work of resuscitation. He who had been so often troubled with the sense of impotence and failure, who had heard the people say of him, 'Doth he not speak parables?' who had been to them as the lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and nothing more than that, was at last to learn that the 'word of the Lord,' spoken by his lips, was mighty, and would not return to him void" (Plumptre).

Ver. 5.—**I will cause breath to enter into you**; literally, *I* am *causing breath* (or, *spirit*) *to enter into you.* The real agent, therefore, in the resuscitation of the bones was to be, not the prophet or the word, but Jehovah himself; and that the end aimed at by the Divine activity was "life" shows the breath spoken of (*ruach*) was not to be the wind, as in ver. 9, or the Spirit, but the breath of life, as in Gen. vi. 17 and vii. 22 (comp. Gen. ii. 7; Ps. civ. 30; Isa. xxvi. 19).

Ver. 6.—The process of revivification is now divided into two stages—a preliminary stage which should effect the reconstruction of the external skeleton, by bringing together its different parts and clothing them with **sinews, flesh, and skin** (comp. Job x. 11); and a finishing stage, which should consist in animating, or "putting breath in,"

the reconstructed skeleton; corresponding to the two stages into which the process of man's original creation was divided (Gen. ii. 7). The result would be that the resurrected and reanimated bones, like newly made man, would know the Lord.

Vers. 7, 8.—**So I prophesied as I was commanded.** The words uttered were without doubt those of vers. 4—6. The effect produced is depicted in its various steps. First, there resulted a noise—literally, *a voice*—which the Revisers take to have been "a thundering;" and Hävernick, Keil, Smend, and others, "a sound" in general; but which Ewald, Hengstenberg, and Schröder, with more propriety, regard as having been an audible voice, if not, as Kliefoth supposes, the trumpet-blast or "voice of God," which, according to certain New Testament passages, shall precede the resurrection and awaken the dead (John v. 25, 28; 1 Cor. xv. 52; 1 Thess. iv. 16); perhaps, as Plumptre suggests, the "counterpart" thereof. Next, a **shaking**, σεισμὸς (LXX.); which the Revisers, following Kliefoth, understand to have been an earthquake, as in 1 Kings xix. 11; Amos i. 1; Zech. i. 1; xiv. 5 (comp. Matt. xxvii. 51), and Ewald explains as "a peal of thunder running through the entire announcement," as in ch. iii. 12, 13 and xxxviii. 19, 20; but which is better interpreted by Keil, Smend, and others as a rustling proceeding from a movement among the bones. Thirdly, **the bones came together in the body as a whole, and in particular bone to his bone**; *i.e.* each bone to the bone with which it was designed to be united, as *e.g.* "the upper to the lower part of the arm" (Schröder). Lastly, **the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above**; or, as in the Revised Version, *there were sinews upon them, and flesh came up and skin covered them above;* precisely as Jehovah had announced to the prophet would take place (ver. 6). Yet, though the external framework of the bodies was finished, there was **no breath in them**—*ruach* having still the same import as in ver. 5. With this the preliminary stage in the reanimating process terminated.

Ver. 9.—The finishing stage began by the prophet receiving a command to **prophesy unto the wind** (better, *breath*, or *spirit*), and to summon it from the four "breaths," or "winds" (in this case the preferable rendering), that it might breathe upon the slain. "Four winds" are mentioned, as in ch. xl. 20, to indicate the four quarters of heaven (comp. ch. v. 10, 12; xii. 14; xvii. 21), and perhaps also to suggest the immense quantity of vitalizing force demanded by the multitude of the dead (Smend), "the fulness and force of the Spirit's operations" (Hengstenberg), or the notion that the Spirit, in resuscitating Israel, would make use of all the varied forces that were then working in the world (Plumptre). The designation of the dead as slain reveals that the resurrection intended was not that of men in general, but of the nation of Israel.

Ver. 10.—**An exceeding great army.** This harmonizes with the feature in the vision which describes the bones as those of slain men, while also it may be viewed as foreshadowing the future destiny of Israel. "The bones of the slain on the field of battle, having been brought together, clothed with flesh, and a new life breathed into them, now they stand up, not as 'a mixed multitude,' but as 'an exceeding great army' prepared to take their part in the wars of Jehovah under new and happier conditions" (Plumptre). (On the phrase, "to stand upon the feet," comp. ch. ii. 1; Zech. xiv. 12; Rev. xi. 11.)

Vers. 11—14 contain, according to most commentators, the Divine interpretation of the vision, Kliefoth alone contending that they furnish, not so much an exposition of the vision—which, he thinks, must be explained independently, and which he regards as teaching the future resurrection of God's people—as an application to Israel's case of the doctrine contained in the vision.

Ver. 11.—**These bones are the whole house of Israel.** On the principle that "God is his own best interpreter," it should not be difficult to see that, whatever foreshadowings of the final resurrection of the just may be contained in the vision, its primary intention was to depict the political and national restoration of Israel (Ephraim and Judah), whose condition at the time the field of withered bones appropriately represented. That Hitzig errs in supposing the "bones" alluded to in this verse symbolized the portions of Ephraim and Judah then dead, instead of the portions still living (in exile), who considered themselves as practically dead, is apparent from the words that follow. **Behold, they say.** The complaint was manifestly taken from the popular sayings current among the people of the exile. Broken up, dispersed, expatriated, and despairing, the members of what had once been "the whole house of Israel" felt there was no hope more of recovering national life and unity. The cheerless character of the outlook they expressed by saying, **Our bones** (not the bones of the dead, but of the living) **are dried**—meaning, "The vital force of our nation is gone" (the bones being regarded in Scripture as the seat of the vital force; comp. Ps. xxxii. 3)—**our hope is lost**—

our hope, *i.e.*, of ever again returning to our own land or regaining national existence—**and we are cut off for our parts**; literally, *we are cut off for ourselves*; which Gesenius explains to mean, "We are lost," taking לָנוּ as a *dativus pleonasticus*; Hitzig, "We are reduced to ourselves;" Delitzsch and Keil, "We are cut off from the land of the living," *i.e.* it is all over with us; Hengstenberg, "We are cut off—a sad fact for us;" Revised Version, "We are clean cut off;" any one of which renders the force of the words (comp. Lam. iii. 54).

Vers. 12—14.—**I will open your graves.** That this is not exact interpretation of the foregoing symbol may be argued from the fact that in the vision no mention is made of graves; yet the discrepancy to which it is supposed to point is more apparent than real. If the prophet was to see the bones, it was requisite that these should be above ground rather than beneath. On the other hand, when one speaks of a grave, it is not needful to always think of an underground tomb. To all intents and purposes a person is in his grave when, life being extinct, his body has returned to the dust. So, the opening of graves promised in Scripture is not so much, or always, the cleaving asunder of material sepulchres, as the bringing back to life of those whose bodies have returned to the dust. Hence the opening of Israel's graves could only signify the reawakening of the politically and religiously dead people to national and spiritual life. This was the first step in the restoration of the future held up before the minds of the despairing people. The second, indicated by the clause, **and shall put my Spirit in you**, pointed, as in ch. xxxvi. 26, 27, to their future endowment with higher moral and spiritual life than they had previously possessed, and not merely, as in vers. 5, 6, to their political and national resuscitation (Smend). The last step, the re-establishment of the reconstructed nation in Palestine, was guaranteed by the word, **I will place you in your own land.** The circumstance that this is twice repeated (vers. 12, 14) shows that whatever view be entertained of the ultimate occupation of Canaan by Israel, this was the goal towards which the vision looked. That it received partial, limited, and temporary fulfilment of a literal kind in the restoration under Zerubbabel and Ezra, is undeniable; that it will ever obtain historical realization of a permanent sort is doubtful; that it will eventually find its highest significance when God's spiritual Israel, the Church of Christ, takes possession of the heavenly Canaan, is one of the clearest and surest announcements of Scripture.

NOTE.—On the above nine verses (6—14) Plumptre writes, "We can scarcely fail to find, in our Lord's words in John v., something like an echo of Ezekiel's teaching. There also, though the truth of the general resurrection is declared more clearly, the primary thought is that of a spiritual resurrection. Further, we may note that the complement of Ezekiel's message is found in the language of Dan. xii. 2. Taking the two together, we find both reproduced in the teaching of John v." (manuscript notes).

Vers. 15—28.—The "word" embodied in this section was probably communicated to the prophet at the close of the preceding vision. Its connection with this is apparent, treating as it does of the union of the then severed branches of the house of Israel, and of the subsequent prosperity which should attend united Israel under the rule of the Messianic King of the future. That this oracle, like the former, had only a temporary and partial accomplishment in the return from captivity is so obvious as to stand in no need of demonstration. Its true fulfilment must be sought in the future ingathering of Israel to the Christian Church.

Ver. 16.—**Take thee one stick, and write.** The symbolic action thus prescribed to the prophet was manifestly based on the well-known historical fact that the tribes of Israel, in Mosaic times, had been represented by a rod, on which was inscribed the name of the tribe (Numb. xvii. 2); but whether the stick Ezekiel was instructed to take was a staff, ῥάβδος (LXX., Hävernick, Hitzig, Kliefoth, and Smend), or a block (Ewald), or simply a piece (Keil, Schröder) of wood on which a few words might be traced, cannot be decided. On the first stick the prophet was directed to write, **For Judah, and the house of Israel his companions**; *i.e.* for the southern kingdom and those of the northern tribes who adhered to it, as *e.g.* Benjamin, Levi, and part of Simeon, with those devout Jehovah-worshippers who from time to time emigrated from other tribes and settled in the land of Judah (2 Chron. xi. 12—16; xv. 9; xxx. 11, 18, 31; xxxi. 1; though by Wellhausen, Smend, and others, such passages are pronounced unhistorical). On the second stick also the prophet was directed to write; but whether **For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and** for (or, *of*) **all the house of Israel his companions** (Authorized and

Revised Versions), or "For Joseph and the whole house of Israel" (Keil), or simply "For Joseph" (Ewald, Hävernick, Smend), cannot be determined. Each interpretation can be supported by quite reasonable considerations. For the first may be pleaded that it best accords with the natural sense of the text; for the second, that the phrase, *the stick of Ephraim*, appears to be explanatory of and in opposition to "For Joseph;" for the third, that *all the house of Israel* stands, like "Ephraim," under the regimen of "stick." The introduction of Joseph as the representative of the northern kingdom rests, not on the fact that Joseph's was the most honourable name among the ten tribes (Hävernick), but on the circumstance that the tribe of Joseph, as represented by Ephraim and Manasseh, constituted the main body of the northern kingdom. The addition of Ephraim's name is best accounted for by remembering that in his hand lay the hegemony of the kingdom. "All the house of Israel his companions" signified the rest of the ten tribes. That the two sticks, when joined together in the prophet's hand, were to become one cannot signify that they were then and there to be miraculously united.

Vers. 18—20.—**Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by these?** literally, *what these* (two pieces of wood) *are to thee*. The suggestion that such a request would be preferred to Ezekiel makes it clear he was meant to perform the symbolic action in public. That his countrymen should fail to understand this action accorded with their proverbial dulness of apprehension (comp. ch. xii. 9; xxiv. 19). In explanation, the prophet was enjoined to **say unto them**, while holding the sticks in his hand, that just as he had made the sticks one in his hand, so would God make one in his hand the two kingdoms symbolized by the sticks. The union of the sticks was to be Ezekiel's work (ver. 17, "in thy hand"); the union of the kingdoms should be Jehovah's (ver. 19, "in my hand"). The separation of the kingdoms had been Ephraim's doing ("in the hand of Ephraim"); their combination should be God's ("in my hand"). Their severance had been effected, on the part of Ephraim, by an unlawful breaking off from the house of Judah, and the establishment of an independent kingdom; their unification should be brought about by the putting down of Ephraim, and the confirming of the crown rights of Judah. The translation, **And will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah**, signifying "And will put the tribes of Israel with him," *i.e.* the tribe of Judah, supported by the LXX., and preferred by Ewald, Smend, and others, is superior to that of the Revised Version margin, "And will put them together with it, unto [or, 'to be'] the stick of Judah." Keil's rendering, "I will take the stick of Joseph . . . and the tribes of Israel his companions, which I put thereon [literally, 'and I put them,' viz. the tribes, 'upon it,' *i.e.* the stick of Joseph] with the stick of Judah," is too involved.

Vers. 21—28 explain how the unification of the two kingdoms should be brought about. The first step should be the bringing of the people home to their own land (vers. 21, 22); the second, their purification from idolatry (ver. 23); the third, the installation over them, thus united and purified, of one King, the ideal David of the future, or the Messiah (vers. 24, 25); the fourth, the establishment with them of Jehovah's covenant of peace (ver. 26), and the permanent erection amongst them of Jehovah's temple (vers. 27, 28).

Vers. 21, 22.—**I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen.** That this promise was intended to find an initial and partial fulfilment in the return from Babylon is undoubted. That it was also designed to look across the centuries towards the final ingathering of God's spiritual Israel into their permanent inheritance, the heavenly Canaan, an examination of its terms shows These clearly presuppose a wider dispersion of Israel than had then, *i.e.* in Ezekiel's day, taken place; and that Israel has never yet been made **one nation upon the mountains of Israel**, is incontestable. Nor is there ground for expecting she ever will be. Not even after the exile closed did all Israel return to Palestine. Nor did it ever come true in their experience that **one king was king to them all**, since, in point of fact, they never afterwards had an earthly sovereign at all who was properly independent. If, therefore, the prince who in the future should shepherd them was not to be a temporal monarch, but the Messiah, the probability is that the Israel he should shepherd was designed to be, not Israel after the flesh, but Israel after the spirit, who should walk in his judgments and observe his statutes, and who, in the fulness of the times, should develop out into the Christian Church. Hence it seems reasonable to conclude that **their own land**, into which they should eventually be brought, would be not so much the veritable soil from which their ancestors had been expelled, as the country or region in which the new, rejuvenated, reunited, and reformed Israel should dwell, which, again, should be a territory cleansed from sin and idolatry, so as to render it a fit abode for

a people devoted to righteousness. Viewed in this light, *their own land* was first Canaan, in so far as after the exile it was cleansed from idolatry; now it is those portions of the earth in which the Christian Church has been planted, so far as these are influenced by the holy principles of religion; finally, it will be the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (comp. ch. xxxiv. 24; xxxvi. 24).

Ver. 23.—**The dwelling-places wherein they have sinned,** from which Jehovah promises to save them, are in accordance with the views expressed above, not, as Hengstenberg and Hitzig conjecture, the dwelling-places of the exile in which the people then were, but the dwelling-places in Canaan in which they had formerly transgressed, but would in future be preserved from transgressing. The idea is, as Schröder suggests, the localization of transgression which is viewed as proceeding from the dwelling-places in which it is committed; or, according to Plumptre, the conception is that, as their habitations had formerly been contaminated by their detestable things, "the worship of teraphim and such like, if not worse," so Jehovah would save them from that contamination. The proposal to alter the text by the transposition of a letter, converting *moshbhothehem*, "dwelling-places," into *meshubhothehem*, "defections," as in Jer. iii. 22 (comp. ch. xxxvi. 29), though adopted by some ancient versions and favoured by Ewald and Smend, is not necessary.

Ver. 25.—The phrase, **my servant David** (comp. ch. xxxiv. 23, 24; Jer. xxxiii. 21, 22, 26; Ps. lxxviii. 70; lxxxix. 3, 20; cxliv. 10), goes back to the Messianic promise of 2 Sam. vii. 12—16, and cannot be satisfactorily explained as signifying the Davidic house (Smend), or as pointing to "a line of true rulers, each faithfully representing the ideal David as the faithful Ruler, the true Shepherd of his people" (Plumptre, on ch. xxxiv. 23), inasmuch as Israel, after Ezekiel's day, never possessed any such line of rulers, and certainly no such line continued for ever. The only feasible exegesis is that which understands Jehovah's servant David to be Messiah, or Jesus Christ, of whom the writer to the Hebrews (i. 8) says, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."

Vers. 26, 27.—With the people thus gathered (ver. 21), united (ver. 22), purified (ver. 23), and established under the rule of Messiah (ver. 25), Jehovah makes a **covenant of peace** (see on ch. xxxiv. 25; and comp. Ps. lxxxix. 3), further characterized as an **everlasting covenant**; or, *covenant of eternity* (see on ch. xvi. 60; and comp. Gen. xvii. 7; Isa. lv. 3; Jer. xxxii. 40); which guarantees the continuance between him and them of undying friendship, conjoined with the bestowment on his part and the enjoyment on theirs of the highest social and religious blessings. First, national existence and secure possession of the soil. **I will place** (literally, *give*) them, either to their land, as in ch. xvii. 22 (Smend), or to be a nation (Keil), or perhaps both (Kliefoth). Next, steady increase of population—**I will multiply them** (comp. ch. xxxvi. 37; Lev. xxvi. 9). Thirdly, perpetual residence of Jehovah amongst them, **I will set** (or, *give*) **my sanctuary** (*mikdashi*, conveying the idea of sanctity) **in the midst of them for evermore** (comp. Lev. xxvi. 11); **my tabernacle** (*mishkani*, the idea being that of residence or dwelling) **also shall be with them**; or, *over them*—the figure being derived from the elevated site of the temple, which overhung the city (Ps. lxix. 29), and intended to suggest the idea of Jehovah's protecting grace. That this promise was in part implemented by the erection of the second temple in the days of Zerubbabel may be conceded, and also that Ezekiel himself may have looked forward to a literal restoration of the sanctuary; but its highest realization must be sought for, first in the Incarnation (John i. 14), next in God's inhabitation of the Church through the Spirit (2 Cor. vi. 16), and finally in his tabernacling with redeemed men in the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. xxi. 3, 22). The last blessing specified is the intimate communion of God with his people, and of them with him—**Yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.** This, which formed the kernel of the old covenant with Israel (Lev. xxvi. 12), became the essence of the new covenant with the Israel of the restoration (ch. xi. 20; xxxvi. 28; Jer. xxx. 22; xxxi. 33; xxxii. 38; Zech. viii. 8; xiii. 9), but only attained to complete realization in the relation of Christian believers to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. vi. 16).

Ver. 28 describes the effect which such a glorious transformation of Israel's character and condition, should produce upon the heathen world. They should recognize from his presence amongst his people, symbolized by the establishment in their midst of his sanctuary, that he had both the power and the will to sanctify them, by making them inwardly as well as outwardly holy; and, recognizing this, they would seek admittance to the congregation and fellowship of God's spiritual Israel.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—14.—*The valley of dry bones.* I. A VISION OF RESTORATION. Undoubtedly, the restoration of Israel is the immediate thought in the mind of Ezekiel. He sees his people stricken to death. The nation is virtually dead. The exiled citizens of Jerusalem have lost all spirit and energy. But with the restoration will come a restored energy to the people. The nation also will once more rise up as from the dead. These resurrections of communities have been seen more than once in history; *e.g.* when papal Rome rose on the ashes of imperial Rome, when Germany was reunited under the Emperor William, when France astonished the world by her renewed strength and prosperity after the terrible invasion of 1870. But while this material form of national resurrection is not infrequent, a moral resurrection is more rare. Byron was enthusiastic for the liberation of Greece, and our age has witnessed the establishment of a free Greek kingdom at Athens. But it remains to be seen whether the genius of ancient Greece will ever return to its old seat. Athens may be rebuilt, and yet Athene (the goddess of intellect) may still slumber in the grave. A true national restoration is only possible as a work of God. Degenerate nations need more than liberation from external tyranny—they need national regeneration.

II. A VISION OF REDEMPTION. The people could not be truly restored unless they were reformed and renewed in heart and character. Hence the strange and striking form in which the promise of restoration is given. It appears as a resurrection. What happened to ancient Israel happens to all the people of God. They are restored to true life and prosperity by means of a spiritual resurrection. Souls are dead in sin. The world is like a valley of dry bones—ugly in its wickedness, helpless in its confusion, utterly unable to save itself. But Christ has come to give new life to the souls of men. His resurrection is a type of the soul's resurrection. St. Paul assumes that Christians are "risen with Christ" (Col. iii. 1). The gospel is thus supremely a message of life. It comes to us in our most degraded, desolate, despairing condition. It brings life and incorruptibility to light.

III. A VISION OF THE RESURRECTION. A fair reading of this passage will not permit us to take it as a promise of an individual resurrection after natural death. It is a parable of the restoration of Israel. The notion that the very bones of the dead are to be pieced together and clothed with flesh, that the scattered dust of corpses is to be gathered from the four quarters of the earth, that the very same animal organism that once lived and died and decayed or was devoured by worms shall be built up again, is a coarse, degrading idea. It gives no suggestion of a future exalted, spiritual life. It is beset with monstrous difficulties when we look at it in the light of the facts of nature. If this old conception of the resurrection be set forth as the only Christian idea, men will not accept it, and the glorious hope of any resurrection or future life at all will be endangered. But this idea is quite contrary to the profound teaching of St. Paul, who says expressly, "Thou sowest not that body that shall be," and "Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven" (1 Cor. xv. 50). The Bible teaches the resurrection of the *dead*, but not the resurrection of *flesh*. The old, coarse, impossible notion has no support in the passage before us. We have here a symbolical vision, and it is no more to be taken literally than the illustration of the two sticks that follows (ver. 16). Still, as a figure and an image it is strikingly suggestive of the future resurrection. He who restores nations and souls by quickening grace will also awaken them that sleep in Jesus, and raise them up, a glorious army redeemed from death.

Vers. 4, 9.—*Prophesying to the dry bones and to the wind.* I. PROPHESYING TO THE DRY BONES. Ezekiel beholds the dismal sight of a valley of dry bones. It is a scene of silent desolation. No picture of death could be more complete. The human remains are not even covered with flesh. He sees bones, not corpses. The bones are dry—the vultures have picked them clean, and they have been left to bleach in the sun. They are not even lying in their natural order as ranks of complete skeletons. They are scattered about. The unclean scavengers that have been at work among them have ruthlessly torn them joint from joint, and mixed them up in apparently

hopeless confusion. Was there ever a scene of more perfect and utter deadness? Yet the prophet is required to preach to these dry bones! St. Peter preaching to the fishes and St. Francis preaching to the birds had at least living audiences, though soulless ones. But here we have a preacher to dry bones. What is most remarkable is that the preaching is effective. An awful scene is witnessed—the bones shake and move and fit themselves together, and flesh, sinews, and skin cover them. All this is illustrative of much preaching to men, and it contains a great encouragement for the preacher. Some audiences are almost like Ezekiel's valley. They are cold, dead, utterly indifferent. These people are, indeed, as so many dry bones. The preacher despairs of doing any good to them. So long as he despairs he will do no good. If Ezekiel had not had obedience, faith, and energy, he would not have taken the trouble to preach to the bones; and then the great resurrection would not have taken place. It is our duty to preach to *all*, despairing of no one. We are to sow beside all waters. God can quicken the dead. Note that Ezekiel's preaching was prophesying, *i.e.* it was speaking as God's messenger and in his power. This is the only preaching that will succeed with the indifferent. The preacher to the godless must be a prophet. He must speak God's truth in God's strength. Mere reasoning or persuading is not sufficient. But prophesying does succeed again and again with the most obdurate. It stirs dry bones.

II. PROPHESYING TO THE WIND. Ezekiel had a measure of success—a wonderful success it appeared to be. The bones fitted themselves together and were clothed with flesh. Still they were not alive. All the result attained hitherto is that the scattered skeletons have become compact corpses. But this is but a valley of death. Now the first preaching has done its work. It is useless merely to repeat it. A new thing must be tried. Ezekiel must prophesy to the wind to breathe on the slain and make them live. When he does this the wind comes, and there stands up "an exceeding great army" of living men. The wind is here regarded as the power of life. It is typical of the Spirit of God (John iii. 8). Life can only come from God's Spirit. The most stirring preaching will not create it. We may preach God's truth in God's strength, and good results may follow, but not the new birth of the Divine life unless the Spirit of God comes and produces it. Preaching does not regenerate. After prophesying to the bones Ezekiel must prophesy to the wind. Preaching must be followed by prayer. The preacher must call down the power of God to his aid if his work is to issue in living results. We need more prophesying to the wind. If life is to take possession of dead souls, we must pray more for the coming of the quickening Spirit. He does come in response to prayer. If the first kind of prophesying is not barren, assuredly the second will not be. When God's Spirit is invoked in the preaching of God's Word, exceeding great armies of souls may rise from the death of sin.

Vers. 15—22.—*The two sticks.* Under the image of two sticks that are joined together, Ezekiel is to symbolize the reunion of Israel and Judah that is to take place in the great restoration. We may see here illustrated a great principle, viz. that *reunion accompanies restoration.* It was so as a fact in the history of Israel. After the restoration we no longer meet with the rivalry of the two nations that made the previous history one long quarrel. The people return to their land as one nation, for no doubt there were representatives of the ten tribes (Luke ii. 36) as well as people of Judah in the caravans that travelled back from the Captivity. This must have been understood in Christian times. Thus St. James writes to "the *twelve* tribes" (Jas. i. 1; cf. also 1 Pet. i. 1). Christ restores man to himself and to God. In doing so he reunites man to his fellow-men. Let us see how this happy result is brought about, observing some of its causes.

I. A COMMON SORROW. Here the foundation of the reunion was laid. Both of the rival nations were driven into captivity. 1. *Sorrow should soften animosity.* In our proud prosperity we may foolishly imagine that we can afford to quarrel. There then seems to be an immense reserve of resources, and we can be lavish in squandering what should be regarded as the riches of friendship. But in truth we need friends, and we desire to cherish them. 2. *Trouble subdues pride.* 3. *Trouble elicits sympathy.* They who have passed through the deep waters of affliction are usually most ready to sympathize with their sorrowing brethren. If we are "partners in distress," we are

the more naturally drawn together. Perhaps this result will give us one explanation of the mystery of sorrow.

II. A COMMON BLESSING. The call to return is for all Israel. All men are called to share in the restoring mercies of Christ. Christians who have responded to the gracious invitation of the gospel and entered into the joy of the new life have all one experience in common. That was a happy day in which hearts leaped for joy when the beloved hills of Palestine came into sight in the blue distance. Surely all old feuds would be forgotten as the restored captives actually walked on their own land and built the cities and planted the vineyards while their gladness overflowed. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion," they said, "we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad" (Ps. cxxvi. 1—3). That was no time for reviving old feuds. Sharing the common blessings of the gospel, we should forget our old quarrels.

III. A COMMON RELIGION. Religion, which should be the great bond of union, has become the great divider of men. People who could agree to live together peaceably on all other accounts fall out about their religion and stand apart in hopeless divisions on this one ground. Thus Israel and Judah were divided by their religion. Israel was jealous of the temple privileges of Jerusalem, and Judah was indignant at the calf-worship of Israel. But now the idolatry is over, and a new temple is to be built at which all parties can work. Christ is our Peace (Eph. ii. 14). He breaks down distinctions of race and party. It is the Christlessness of religion that makes religious differences. If we all had more of Christ we should all be more united; for he is the one centre of union in the Christian Church.

Ver. 23.—*The fascination of idolatry.* Idolatry was a besetting sin of Israel. No sooner were the people delivered from Egypt by the great unseen God than they made a golden calf. Intercourse with the Moabites led to idolatry in a later stage of the wilderness-wanderings (Numb. xxv. 2). The story of Micah and his god gives us a glimpse of the gross popular superstition that was to be found in Israel during the days of the judges (Judg. xvii. 4). Solomon in all his glory was lured to idolatry by foreign heathenish wives (1 Kings xi. 4). The separated northern tribes emphasized their schism by setting up calves at Dan and Bethel. The prophets were compelled to denounce idolatry, and the doom of the Captivity was largely earned by this sin (ch. xiv. 7). What is its essential character? and whence does it draw its singular fascination?

I. THE SURVIVAL OF ANTIQUITY. Joshua reminded the people that their fathers worshipped "other gods" (Josh. xxiv. 2). The Hebrews cannot be described as an originally and naturally monotheistic race. Monotheism does not seem to be innate in any branch of the Semitic family. On the contrary, it is much more readily traced in the early history of the Aryan races. The Semitic instinct rather points to cruel and lustful nature-worship, accompanied by gross idolatry, although by the inspiration of their prophets the Hebrews were called out of this low form of religion to the worship of the holy Jehovah. Superstitions of idolatry linger long after a more spiritual worship is established. This is seen in missionary lands; and even in Europe heathenish customs are mixed up with Christian belief. Much of the corruption of Christianity in Romanism is just the perpetuation of the old paganism under Christian names.

II. THE CONTAGION OF EXAMPLE. The Jews were surrounded by heathen peoples. They were called to a lonely destiny of separation. But they did not always realize their vocation. Their later idolatry was an importation from their neighbours. Men are much influenced in religion by what is called "the spirit of the times," by the fashion of the day, by the stream of prevalent customs. It is hard to make our religion a continual protest against popular ideas and practices.

III. THE CHARM OF THE SENSUOUS. Idols were visible, tangible objects. It was so much easier to offer worship to such things than to the unseen God of heaven. It is our perpetual temptation to neglect the spiritual for the material. We do not prostrate ourselves before calves of gold; but we are tempted to worship coins of gold. Our idol-temples are the marts of commerce. The British Parthenon is the Bank of England.

The whole tendency of life is towards absorption in things temporal, concrete, visible—eating and drinking, clothing and building, merry-making and amusements. Even in religion we tend to degenerate to the sensuous, and music and pageantry threaten to supersede worship and meditation. The visible ritual endangers the invisible devotion. All this is idolatry.

IV. THE COMFORT OF A LOW IDEAL. The intellectual strain of spiritual worship is not its most exacting characteristic. God is not only unseen; he is holy, and he can only be approached with clean hands and a pure heart. The religion of Israel was a religion of holiness. This was its most marked feature in contrast with heathenism. It was possible to satisfy all the demands of idolatry and yet to remain in sin. Nay, much of the monstrous ritual of idol-worship consisted in the indulgence of licentious passions. It was much easier to worship idols than to worship the holy God. A worldly life is compatible with a low moral standard. Hence the temptation to be satisfied with this life. But Christ calls us to the loftiest ideal and to a warfare against sin. We must take up the cross if we would follow him.

Vers. 24, 25.—*Christ the King.* I. THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST IS A GLORIOUS FACT. In Ezekiel it is only predicted. To Christians it is an accomplished fact. Christ has come and has realized the ideal of ancient prophecy. 1. He is of the *line of David.* He was welcomed as the Son of David (Luke xviii. 38). He gathers up the old traditions of Israel's golden age, and lifts their promises to a higher fulfilment. 2. He is a *Shepherd.* Aristotle quoted Homer to show that the true king should be a shepherd. Christ rules tenderly and with regard to the welfare of his people, not like the cruel, selfish, despotic monarchs of heathen empires. 3. He is God's *Servant.* Therefore (1) it is God's will that we should have Christ as our King, and (2) Christ rules according to the will of God.

II. THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST IS A CENTRE OF UNITY. "And they all shall have *one* Shepherd." Judah and Israel are to have but one King, and are to be united under the reign of this new David. "The envy also of Ephraim shall depart," etc. (Isa. xi. 13). The supreme advantage of the institution of a monarchy is that it cements the people under it into a consolidated unity. Christ is the Head of the body, and as such he harmonizes the movements of all the limbs. It is strange that Christendom should be broken up into innumerable mutually antagonistic factions. But Christ is not responsible for those divisions. On the contrary, it is just the loss of Christ in the Churches that leads to their severance.

III. THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST IS AN INSPIRATION FOR OBEDIENCE. "They shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes to do them." It is more difficult to obey an abstract law than to serve a living person. Christianity by no means gives us a dispensation from the obligation of obedience. Our Lord expects his disciples to "exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matt. v. 20), and it is possible to do this by his new method. No longer painfully toiling along the dreary road of formal legalism, Christians are inspired by an enthusiasm for their Master which fires their love and zeal to do or suffer on his behalf; and this glorious, loving service of Christ is just the obedience and righteousness transformed into a new and attractive shape.

IV. THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST IS A FOUNDATION OF SOLID PROSPERITY. Under the new David the people will live at peace in the possession of their land. The service of Christ introduces all Christians to a splendid inheritance. The Christian life is not a wild knight-errantry. It is the enjoyment of a happy and peaceful kingdom. When Christ's reign is universal, society will be happy and prosperous. Even now inward peace and rich treasures of Divine grace are the portion of his people on earth, while they are cheered with the prospect of entering into a wonderful "inheritance of the saints in light" when the present life is over.

V. THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST IS TO BE ETERNAL. "My Servant David shall be their Prince *for ever.*" The reign of Christ was never so widespread as it is in this nineteenth century. His sun dawned nearly two thousand years ago. It is still climbing to its meridian. Sunset Christ shall never have. The Light of the world is the light of the ages—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8).

Ver. 27.—*God's tabernacle.* I. GOD IS IN THE MIDST OF HIS PEOPLE. He is not a distant divinity seated on cloud-capped Olympus or hidden in remote heavenly regions. He visits the earth and even dwells there. We recognize his presence in the beauty of spring and the wealth of autumn; we hear his voice in the thunderstorm, and we see his glory in the sunshine. He haunts the cathedral aisles of the forest; he unveils his glory beneath the blue dome that covers the fair fields of nature. Assuredly he is in our homes shedding peace and love; he draws very near to our souls in the night of sorrow; and he smiles upon us in our innocent joys. Moreover, while God is thus universally present, he manifests himself especially to his people as he does not unto the world (John xiv. 22, 23). This is not on account of any unreasonable partiality, any unfair favouritism. He says justly, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me" (Prov. viii. 17).

II. GOD'S PRESENCE IS A PROTECTION FOR HIS PEOPLE. He says that his tabernacle shall be not merely "*with* them," but "*over* them," as the phrase should be rendered. We think of a sheltering tent protecting the people from the heat of the sun by day and from the frosts by night. In the olden times the tabernacle was planted in the midst of the camp, but the people generally were not admitted to its covered shrine, which was reserved for a privileged priesthood. Now, however, the veil is rent, and now all God's people are priests, as the apostle to the Jews declared (1 Pet. ii. 9). Now, therefore, God's tabernacle is not only in the midst of the camp, gazed at with admiration by a surrounding host. It is spread over the people of God, because they are allowed to enter its most holy place. Our safety lies in our nearness to God, and when we truly seek to enter into close communion with Heaven we find that there is a sense of security and peace that can be found in no other way. 1. God then *protects from trouble*, even when the blow falls, by strengthening us to bear it. 2. He *protects from temptation* by giving us a joy greater than that of the pleasures of sin. 3. He protects from *the guilt of the past*, by taking away our sins and giving free forgiveness. 4. He protects from *the fear of the future*, by assuring us that he will never leave us nor forsake us.

III. GOD'S PRESENCE WITH HIS PEOPLE SECURES THEIR UNION WITH HIM. "Yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people." It is difficult to love and trust an absent Being, but nearness stimulates affection and confidence. 1. *The people own God.* He is "their God." This signifies willing acceptance following deliberate choice. No man has a true experience of religion until he can say from his heart, "The Lord is *my* God." 2. *God owns his people.* They are his by right of creation; they are still more his by right of redemption—"bought with a price." God's ownership implies (1) his right to do as he will with his people; (2) his care to preserve his possession; (3) his joy in dwelling among his children.

Observe, in conclusion: 1. *Sin removes the tabernacle of God from our midst.* When Israel sinned, the tabernacle was pitched outside the camp. 2. *Christ brings God back into closest association with us.* In Christ he "pitches his tent among us" (John i. 14).

Ver. 28.—*The sanctification of the Church a gospel for the world.* I. THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE CHURCH. 1. *Its form.* Sanctification is essentially a being set apart for God. This involves two ideas. (1) Separation. The Jews were separated from the heathen. Christians are called out from the world. Christ founded the Church partly in order that Christians might realize the brotherhood of a family within its borders, and partly that they might be divided from the heathenish world. The superficial Christianizing of the world, and the more than superficial worldliness of the Church, have combined to obscure the old lines of demarcation. But we cannot afford to neglect them. (2) Dedication. The separated people are set apart for God, as young Samuel was separated from his house and given to the Lord. This is the explanation of the separation; here we see its purpose. The separation does not take place for the sake of making a difference, but in order that the people of God may wholly give themselves to his service. 2. *Its character.* Though the pure idea of sanctification is formal rather than moral, and means essentially a setting apart for God, it is only realized in the experience of personal holiness. (1) We can only be separated from the world by giving up the sin of the world. The mark of separation

is purity of character. (2) We can only be devoted to God by purity of heart. Only thus can we see God (Matt. v. 8). Only thus can our service be acceptable in his sight. Thus sanctification comes to be equivalent to making pure and holy. 3. *Its cause.* God sanctifies his people. They must desire and seek the sanctification, but they cannot create it. Men may separate themselves from the world in external profession and habit, living as hermits in the wilderness, immuring themselves in cloistered monasteries, repudiating conventional manners with Puritan precision; and all the while they may remain worldly at heart. They may offer themselves formally for the service of God, and take office in the Church, and yet be only self-seekers and servants of sin. As purification is essential to sanctification, sanctification must be a Divine act. This is the great work of the Holy Spirit. God separates, consecrates, and purifies his people through the action of his Spirit in them.

II. THE INFLUENCE OF THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE CHURCH ON THE WORLD. The heathen shall know that God sanctifies Israel. This fact will be a witness to the pagan world of the power and character of God. It will be a great sermon in history, a preaching in events. No preaching can be more powerful. The greatest hindrance to missionary work consists in the wicked conduct of persons from Christian lands who visit heathen countries. The example of the Christian life is its best help. Christ preached by his life more than by his words. His cross on Calvary is more eloquent than his Sermon on the Mount. If we desire to give a new impulse to missionary enterprises we must begin at home. We must first of all consecrate our own hearts and lives afresh to our Master; we must seek a new baptism of the Holy Ghost for the sanctification of the Church. The Pentecost that brought a spiritual blessing to the little company in the upper room at Jerusalem started the great evangelistic triumphs of the apostolic age. While it may be well to discuss missionary methods, we much more need to seek a spiritual revival of the home Churches, that a new impulse may be given to the most fruitful form of missionizing—the living influence of a consecrated people.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The valley of death.* The picture so impressively presented in these verses is a picture of the Israelitish people in their Eastern captivity. The national life is for a period suspended. The people are dead and dry as bones scattered upon the surface of an open valley which has been the scene of carnage in battle. Yet the description is always and justly held to portray the moral condition of our sinful humanity apart from the quickening interposition of the Lord and Giver of life.

I. SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT REVEALS WHAT IS REAL BENEATH WHAT IS APPARENT. To other eyes no such vision as that which broke upon the sight of the inspired prophet was accorded. On the contrary, men might have looked upon Israel—part of the people in captivity, and part still occupying the land of their fathers—and have seen nothing but such misfortune and calamity as are incident to human history. To the prophetic, quickened, illumined mind of Ezekiel the real state of the nation was manifest. In like manner, a superficial observer might direct his attention to the human race without apprehending its spiritual condition as one of deprivation, of gloom, of death; he might be dazzled by external splendour and prosperity, and it might not occur to him that beneath the fair and glittering outside there was concealed from his eyes what, after all, is the most important characteristic of humanity, regarded spiritually.

II. THE REALITY TO BE RECOGNIZED IS THE PRESENCE AND THE POWER OF SPIRITUAL DEATH. 1. The cause of this is sin. Life flows from communion with him who is the ever-living Fountain of life. Severed from God, the soul cannot live. 2. The effects and signs of this death are numerous and evident. Insensibility to Divine truth, to virtue, to immortality, may be mentioned as most impressively brought before us in the vision which Ezekiel saw. The dry bones lay scattered about the plain, insensible to everything, to every presence about them, neither affected by any occurrence nor initiating any movement. Such is the state of the spiritually dead—the "dead in trespasses and sins."

III. HOPELESSNESS DISTINGUISHES THE STATE OF THE SPIRITUALLY DEAD. "Son

of man, can these bones live?" If the answer depended upon human sagacity, if the means to awaken life were such as are available to human wisdom alone, such as are known by human experience, there can be but one answer "Life is impossible!" Who that looked upon pre-Christian society could cherish the hope that from that necropolis there could start into vitality and activity a host of living, consecrated beings, filled with the life of God, eager to do the work of God? Could the Church have grown out of the world? The supposition is an absurdity. The prophet's reply to the inquiry was the only reply that was reasonable. All depended upon God; man was powerless and hopeless for revival. "O Lord God, thou knowest!"—T.

Vers. 4—10.—*The call to life.* The sublimity of this vision is the sublimity, not of imagination, but of truth. But it was truth that was not open to every mind; it was truth discerned by an intellect quickened into supernatural insight and comprehension by the Divine Source alike of truth and of life.

I. THE MINISTRY OF PROPHECY. 1. It presumes intelligent natures to which the appeal is made. 2. It presumes a Supreme Authority by which the prophet is selected, fitted, and guided in the discharge of his office. 3. It presumes a ministerial nature and character, on the one side open to communications from God, on the other side sympathetic with those for whose benefit such communications are vouchsafed. 4. It presumes an occasion and circumstances, suggesting the fulfilment of a spiritual mission.

II. THE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF THE LIVING GOD ACCOMPANYING TRUE PROPHECY. 1. The prophet speaks at the Divine command. There are times when he is silent, and times when he utters the thoughts, the warnings, the exhortations, that are in him. When the command is given, then the silence is broken. 2. The prophet utters a Divine message. He speaks for God, and they who listen to him hear the voice of God. 3. His utterances are therefore altogether without regard to what men would call probabilities or even possibilities. Nothing could have been further from all human likelihood than that anything should follow upon such a ministry as that here described. The prophet was directed to address "dry bones," and to summon dry bones to "hear the word of the Lord"! Had he been other than a prophet, he would have deemed such a mission an absurdity. "God's ways are not our ways, neither our thoughts his thoughts." 4. A higher than human wisdom and might breathe in the utterances of the prophet. The dignity of his attitude, the sublimity of his thoughts, are not of this world. He must be either a pretender and a fanatic, or else a representative of God himself, who can make use of such language as Ezekiel records himself to have used: "Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live."

III. THE MOVEMENT EFFECTED BY THE AGENCY OF PROPHECY. In this impressive vision the prophet witnessed the power of the words he was directed to utter. A thundering noise and an earthquake followed his prophesying, and to his own amazement he saw bones come together—bone to his bone; he saw the bones clothed with sinews, flesh, and skin. This marvellous transformation was still unaccompanied by life. Surely a revelation to us of the great things that may be and are effected through the instrumentality of a personal and spiritual agency, which yet fall short of the highest and most beautiful and blessed of all effects, viz. spiritual vitality itself. Is it not still and ever the case that by human agencies men are taught, admonished, trained to habits of rectitude, encouraged in a useful life, by a Divine Power indeed—for all good of every grade is from God—but by an exercise of power which is yet inferior to the highest of all?

IV. THE NEW LIFE WHICH IS, IN CONSONANCE WITH PROPHECY, BREATHED BY THE DIVINE SPIRIT. The result of the summons to the breath from the four winds was at once and most wonderfully apparent. The dry bones lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army! It is impossible to believe that the significance of this glorious conclusion to the vision is exhausted by the restoration of the sons of Israel to their native soil and ancient inheritance. We have the authority of the prophet himself for believing that in this event there was a fulfilment of the vision. And it probably seemed to many observers almost as incredible that the Jews should be brought back from their captivity and should as a nation again live and prosper, as

that the bones of the dead, strewn upon a battle-field, should be restored to life and should become again an army of mighty warriors. To the mind that thinks deeply and justly it will seem still more surprising that our humanity, sunk in the slumber and the death of sin, should awake to newness of life, should receive the Spirit of God, and should become his living army of truth and righteousness. It was the purpose of Christ's coming that we might have life, and that in abundance. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. Thus it may be said that the production, fulness, and increase of spiritual life is the main result of the advent of the Saviour and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

V. THE TRANSFORMATION AND CONTRAST BROUGHT ABOUT IN FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY. God speaks by his herald and representative, and his word is a word of power. The disjointed and sundered are united, the dry bones are clothed with flesh, the dead live, movement and the glad sound of life follow the stillness and the silence of the grave. An army of the living God is fashioned out of material the most unlikely. Thus the presence and operation of the Eternal is made manifest, the flagging faith of men is revived, and the future of humanity is irradiated with immortal hope.—T.

Vers. 11—14.—*The Divine Restorer.* The interpretation of the vision of the valley of dry bones was given by the prophet himself. It was intended that the Israelites, when restored to their own land and to national unity and vigour, should discern in this restoration the hand of Divine Providence. A most unlikely event was about to happen, and Ezekiel desired that those in whose favour the great interposition was about to be wrought should be mindful, both of the condition of hopelessness into which they had been plunged by their own sins, and of the marvel of the Divine mercy to which they owed their deliverance, renewal, and revival.

I. THE DEATH AND DESPONDENCY OF THE CAPTIVITY. The Jewish people had endured many afflictions and chastisements; but the Captivity was the sorest disaster which had overtaken them, the profoundest humiliation into which they had been plunged. To so earnest a patriot as Ezekiel the case seemed, apart from Divine commiseration and help, one utterly depressing to contemplate. Human deliverer there was not; way of deliverance opened not up; the prospect was dark. The whole house of Israel, contemplating the situation, summed it up in the mournful exclamation, "Our hope is lost; we are clean cut off."

II. THE COMPASSIONATE INTERPOSITION OF THE DIVINE DELIVERER. When human help there was none, the Lord looked in pity upon his own. "Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people." Their state was as that of those dead and buried out of men's sight. But with God nothing is impossible. His voice can summon even the dead to life. The hearts of kings and rulers are in his hands. He deviseth means whereby his banished ones may return.

III. THE SPIRITUAL ENERGY CONDITIONING THE RECOVERY AND RENEWAL. Providential intervention is not all that is necessary. An internal as well as an external condition is requisite. No great work on behalf of a nation can, any more than a great work on behalf of an individual, be effected apart from the state, the character, the purposes, the voluntary co-operation of those who are to be benefited. We have an intimation of this in the present case in the promise, "I will put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live." To put a people in their own territory would be of no avail to the national life were not the people gifted with a spirit of patriotism, of unity, of hopefulness, above all, of true religion. A restoration such as that effected for Israel, in order to be a real thing, must be accompanied by the new heart, the new national endeavour and patience, the new devotedness to the higher aims of social and political existence. God, who gives the boon, gives also the preparation by which the boon may be appropriated and used.

IV. THE RESTORATION ITSELF. This was mainly, at all events in the general apprehension, a political movement. The capital was reoccupied, the temple services were restored in something like their former dignity and beauty; the reputation of the nation was in some measure retrieved. But beyond all this, in the apprehension of the more thoughtful there was a religious reformation of greater interest and importance. The life from the dead was life unto Jehovah and unto his laws and ordinances—a life not

ceremonial, but spiritual. Idolatry, at all events, was for ever abandoned; many of the temptations of former times were for ever outgrown. Some good was thus effected, and good of such a nature as to confer a real service and blessing upon mankind.

V. THE GIVING OF GLORY TO WHOM IT WAS DUE. In two respects especially the Lord assured the Israelites, by his prophets, honour should accrue to himself through the return of his chosen people. 1. His power should be recognized as the true cause of the redemption. 2. His faithfulness should be adored by those to whom the promise had been given, and by whom the fulfilment of the promise was enjoyed.—T.

Vers. 15—28.—*Unity.* As in many other instances, so here Ezekiel propounds a great moral and prophetical lesson by means of symbol. The two sticks which he is directed to join one to another into one stick represent the two divisions, the two kingdoms, of Judah and of Northern Israel, and their union represents the abolition of the distinction, the schism, which had been so injurious to the national welfare, and the formation of one people, one in brotherly love, one in mutual helpfulness, one in the unity of national and political life, and one in religious faith, worship, and observance. This exhibition of the beauty and value of unity is worthy of the consideration of Christians in our own time, when divisions are so abundant and are thought of so lightly, whilst they are most injurious to the interests of Christianity and most pernicious in their influence upon the unbelieving world. General lessons underlie the special exhortations and promises of this passage of prophecy.

I. UNITY IS BROUGHT ABOUT BY GOD HIMSELF. He is the God of peace, and delights in peace. "I," says he, "will make them one nation in the land." The kind of unity which is effected by the action of common human sympathy or interest is neither valuable nor permanent. True unity needs a Divine basis.

II. UNITY IS MANIFEST IN BROTHERLY LOVE AND SYMPATHY. That is to say, it is, first of all, unity of heart. When the same Divine Spirit works in many natures he produces similar effects in all; and his handiwork is nowhere more evident than in the prevalence of mutual love. The members of the same body, being obedient to the one Head, render one to another the tribute of mutual interest and kindly willingness to serve and help.

III. UNITY CONSISTS IN COMMON SUBJECTION TO ONE KING. "One King shall be king to them all;" "My Servant David shall be King over them, and they shall all have one Shepherd." The political unity of the Jews seems lost sight of in the Messianic reference of the prediction. The Church of Christ is one because there is over it but one Head, even Christ himself. All true Christians, every true Christian community in every place, acknowledge his sole sovereignty and confess allegiance to his sole authority.

IV. UNITY IS DISPLAYED IN THE ABANDONMENT AND REPUDIATION OF ALL UNFAITHFULNESS. When some of the children of Israel worshipped Jehovah, and others some one or other of the various hateful deities of the heathen, it was impossible that there should be unity. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" There is thus a *negative* condition of spiritual oneness. The minds of men must be turned away from error and sin, in order that they may with one accord be turned Godwards and heavenwards. The unfaithful to God cannot be faithful one to another. They must have the same loathing and the same liking.

V. UNITY IS DISPLAYED IN A COMMON AND CONJOINT OBEDIENCE. This is a *positive* condition of spiritual oneness. "They shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes to do them." They who are one in heart will not find it difficult to be one in life. The laws are one, although the obedient are scattered far and wide, although the forms of obedience vary with varying circumstances.

VI. THE UNITY IS EVERLASTING. This can be true only of a unity which is Divine in its basis and its bonds. The language used in this portion of prophecy must refer to the spiritual kingdom of Christ. "David my Servant shall be their Prince *for ever*;" "They shall dwell in the land *for ever*;" "I will make an *everlasting* covenant with them;" "I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them *for evermore*." Such expressions are true, and they are true only of the kingdom which is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." No national, probably no ecclesiastical, unity upon earth is permanent. But the Son of God is King for ever, and the subjects of his spiritual

empire are bound together by the common ties which unite them to their Lord—ties which time cannot weaken and death cannot dissolve.—T.

Ver. 27.—*The tabernacle of God with men.* There can be no question that one great purpose of the appointment, first of the tabernacle, and then of the temple, as the centre of the national and religious life of Israel, was to familiarize the people with the thought of God's constant presence in the midst of them, as well as to provide means and opportunities for special intercommunion between the Divine King and his subjects. The coming of Christ whose body was the temple of Deity, the coming of the Holy Spirit whose abiding indwelling constitutes the temple, the Church, of God, did away with the necessity for a local and temporary dwelling-place of God upon earth, but secured the permanent reality of the fellowship of which such a dwelling-place was the symbol and the means.

I. GOD'S TABERNACLE WITH MEN REMINDS US OF THE UNIVERSAL PRESENCE OF THE DEITY UPON EARTH THROUGHOUT ALL TIME.

II. AND OF HIS SPECIAL AND CONGENIAL PRESENCE AMONG AND WITH HIS OWN PEOPLE.

III. AND OF HIS GRACIOUS PURPOSE TO REVEAL UNTO THEM HIS OWN CHARACTER AND WILL.

IV. AND OF HIS CONSTANT WILLINGNESS TO RECEIVE THEIR WORSHIP AND HOMAGE.

V. AND OF HIS DESIRE TO MAINTAIN CLOSE AND UNBROKEN RELATIONS OF CORDIALITY AND KINDNESS WITH HIS PEOPLE.

APPLICATION. The privilege of fellowship with God should be reverently cherished, prized, and cultivated. The means and occasions of such fellowship should not be mistaken for the fellowship itself. The truest dignity and sacredness of this earthly life consists in the opportunity it offers of communion with the unseen but ever-present God and Saviour. The strongest attraction of the life to come lies in the prospect of a closer approach to God, a more uninterrupted fellowship with God, and a nearer assimilation to his perfect and glorious character.—T.

Vers. 1—14.—*The vision of dry bones.* As an architect, before erecting a mansion, sketches accurately all his plan on paper—a guide to himself and to his co-workers—so, prior to God's resuscitation of Israel, he sketches out his plan before the mental eye of Ezekiel. By a mighty influence from God, the prophet is borne away in spirit to a great valley in Chaldea, devoted to the burial of Israel's dead. The spot possibly was sadly familiar to the prophet's eye. The loose sand had been swept aside by some violent tornado. The bones of the buried were exposed, and were dry and bleached by the tropical sun. It was a pitiable and repulsive spectacle. That such vestiges of human beings could be reclothed in flesh and raised again to life seemed, to human view, impossible; and Ezekiel did wisely to refer the matter back to God. The man of God is commanded to address these silent remnants of human nature, and to announce to them God's high design; and while he spake, lo! a noise, a movement, bone sought its fellow-bone. Flesh silently grew upon these skeletons, and a fair covering of skin veiled the rugged flesh. Still, it was a valley of death—a spectacle more revolting than before. Again Ezekiel is summoned to prophesy, and this time to prophesy to the winds. Then the breath of life passed into those ghastly forms; the dead stood erect and strong—an army of living men, a nation. Such was the vision—a vivid picture imprinted on the mind.

I. MARK ISRAEL'S DESPERATE CONDITION. Whatever may have been the fortunes of some individuals, as a *nation* their fortunes were deplorable. All that was distinctive about Israel had vanished. Tithings, temple ritual, priesthood, Passover, distinction in meats,—*all* had disappeared. They were fast becoming amalgamated, in language, habits, and occupation, with their conquerors. As a body, they were utterly dislocated. Their several orders had vanished. The organism was broken up. Their national life was destroyed. Their condition was deplorable, fitly symbolized by dry and dissevered bones. Prospect of restoration there was none. The faithful few were sinking into despair. Vivid picture this of human nature severed from the living God. Compared with the purity and nobleness that might be, the condition is aptly figured by death. Filial love and trust are dead. Conscience, the sense of right, is dead. Heavenly

aspirations are dead. The hope of immortality is dead. Departing from God, men become "earthly, sensual, devilish." The captivity of the grave aptly symbolizes their estate. The high design of their being is frustrated. Severance from God is followed by the rupture of social ties, mutual discords, and mutual hate.

II. ISRAEL'S PROSPECT OF NEW ORGANIZATION. The prospect is due solely to the interposition of God. He proposes a tremendous question to his servant, "Can these bones live?" Devoutly the prophet refers the question back to God. By proposing difficult questions to his servants, God stimulates them to reflection, concentrates their attention upon salient points, teaches them a modest estimate of their powers. 1. *In elevating mankind there is need for the prophet's mission.* As the greatest enemy of mankind is man, so man can be a real friend and helper to his race. The world is deeply indebted to its teachers. All the ages are indebted to Moses, to Solon, to Socrates, and to St. Paul. The man who can lay his finger upon a plague-spot and announce a remedy, the man who can lead a nation up to a higher level of life, is a benefactor to the race. Most of all, the man who can reveal to us God, who can unveil to us his character, his designs concerning us, our duty to him, he is of all men the most influential, the most kingly. 2. *No real improvement in human nature can be achieved without God's power.* Although the man of God was charged to prophesy, his message simply declared what God was about to do. "I will lay sinews upon you; I will bring up flesh upon you; I will cover you with skin," saith the Lord God. No amelioration is abiding that does not come from God. All political organization that is to produce benefit to a nation must be full of God. Every step in the process of moral elevation must have God in it. We can only act successfully while we act in the line of his Law, and have all the channels we create filled with a Divine force. God deigns to take a practical interest in the minutest affairs of men.

III. ORGANIZATION IS IMPOTENT WITHOUT LIFE. To the prophet's ecstatic vision the human organism was now complete. Every limb and member was articulated—was in its allotted place. But the great want was yet unmet. The highest endowment was lacking. Everything waited, in silent yearning, for life. Then the prophet is summoned to another duty. Having spoken to men, he must speak to God. He must invoke the vital breath of Heaven. For this great undertaking there is required all the fulness and force of the Divine Spirit. "Come from all quarters, O breath of life!" "Wind of the north, come and rouse men from their long slumber! Wind of the east, come and brace men's energies for new exertions. Wind of the west, come and bring fertilizing showers, that shall penetrate and soften the heart! Wind of the south, come, quicken the plants of grace and ripen the fruits of piety!" If only God be with us, the most difficult undertaking will succeed. If God did, at the first, create human nature out of nothing, the work of reconstruction cannot be more difficult. To God nothing is impossible. Omnipotence covers every task.

IV. A MAGNIFICENT RESULT. The prophet was not disobedient to the heavenly voice. As the echo responds to the speaker, so promptly did Divine influence attend the prophetic word. Under the direction and inspiration of God, human labour and prayer can produce prodigious effects. The scenes of death become scenes of life. A nation rises up as if out of its grave. By the manifested power of God's grace the highest personal life appears; the Church's life is created; national life is purged and elevated; and the resurrection to an imperishable life is assured. If God be on our side, no height of excellence is inaccessible; and if he has pledged his word, he will perform it in no stinted fashion. To have real childlike faith in God's word and in God's faithfulness brings the highest joy. To be in actual touch with God transfigures character and enriches human life. Heaven is begun on earth if we know God by personal and familiar experience. A grand climax of blessing is involved in the words, "Then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it."—D.

Vers. 15—28.—*Union essential to highest prosperity.* It is clear that this series of prophecies had, at least, a twofold meaning. These predictions pointed to beneficial changes near, visible, temporal; they pointed also to grander events more distant, more spiritual. The fulfilment of prophecy was also another prophecy. The immediate performance of God's promise was a type of larger performance. As each harvest is a prophecy of the next, so one fulfilment of God's covenant symbolizes a fulfilment

on a larger and nobler scale. Time is a picture of eternity. What was really good in the past shall reappear in the future. Israel's passage through the Red Sea was a symbol of later deliverances. The royal life of David shall be reproduced. As the secret principle of David's power and David's prosperity was that he ruled by a spirit of love, which knit the people in unity; so David shall be the emblem of Messiah's person, and Messiah's gentle sway. The passage now under consideration refuses to be confined within a local application; it embraces the renovated race and the immortal King. To make this announcement the more impressive, it was attended by a significant action. It is a prophecy both spoken and acted. It was an ancient custom, prevalent still in the East, to write on flat sticks, and these were sometimes tied together after the simplest fashion of a book. Discord and division had been the first step in Israel's retrogression and fall. Internal strife prepared the way for invasion and defeat. Now, reunion is a necessary step to the fulfilment of the Divine promise—the first step towards a new national life.

I. REAL UNION CAN ONLY BE EFFECTED BY INWARD RENOVATION. Hence the gracious promise is repeated, "I will save them out of their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them." This truth must be repeated times without number. So long as rebellion against God occupies the heart, so long there will be strife and hatred between man and man. Infidelity has always been hostile to society. But as men get nearer to God as their Centre, the circumference diminishes, and they get nearer to each other. The uprooting of selfishness from the human heart is the removal of discord and war. If the fountain be made pure, pure will be the streams. Sin separates. Piety unites. After the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, men were fused in brotherhood, and did not even count their goods their own. New-felt love swallowed up every other sentiment. "They had all things common."

II. UNION AMONG THE PEOPLE IS CEMENTED BY ALLEGIANCE TO ONE KING. "David my servant shall be King over them, and they all shall have one Shepherd." The rivalry of opposing kings in Rehoboam's day had been the root of endless mischief. "Like king, like people." This new Monarch has such incomparable claims that a rival is out of the question. His august worth will win from his subjects intense loyalty and love; and in proportion to their intense love for him there will develop attachment to each other. In his pure presence mutual suspicion and distrust hide away abashed. It is a part of his royal mission to foster all right sympathies. To be like their King is the high ambition of each. To serve and please their King is the common purpose of every true Israelite. To love one another is but another form of loving him.

III. UNION IS FOSTERED BY DOING GOD'S WILL. "They shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes." They that walk in the same road usually become good companions. And these new subjects of Messiah delight in these paths. They speak to each other of their joy. They delight to encourage each other to surmount such obstacles as appear, and to press on in the royal way. Their understandings being divinely illumined, they see such excellence in God's will that their wills become conformed to his. So, in becoming conformed to God's will, they become like each other. Among the children a common likeness appears. Fellow-soldiers on the same battle-field become fast friends. Common service and exposure to common dangers form a strong bond of union. In serving God we also serve one another.

IV. UNION SECURES GOD'S NEARER PRESENCE. "I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore." If men feel that it is "good for brethren to dwell together in unity," God feels it still more to be both "good and pleasant." Our God is a God of order. Amid scenes of discord he will not abide. If men prefer his foe—the fomenter of hatreds—he will depart. But where true unity of spirit reigns among men God will nearer come, will take up his abode, will make an everlasting covenant with them; his sanctuary is the sign of union and the security for union. Then the channel is open for the highest good to descend. God will become, in every practical respect, their God. His light shall be their light, his strength shall be their strength, his purity shall become their purity, his joy shall become theirs. God's fulness shall replenish their emptiness.

V. UNION IN THE TRUE ISRAEL SHALL PRODUCE A SALUTARY EFFECT UPON THE WORLD. "The heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel." Here is the germ of the truth which was fully expanded in the intercessory prayer of Christ,

"That they all may be one, that the world may believe that thou didst send me." It is little short of a miracle that the kingdom of our Lord should be maintained, much less grow, when so much division exists. That man contracts no light sin who uses his influence in keeping Christians apart. Real schism is a monstrous sin. And when the purity, the piety, the practical love, of the Church become eminent, these will produce a stupendous impression upon the world without. Holiness which is not austere, holiness expressed in its native form of sterling goodness, has an omnipotent charm which, once seen by men, fascinates all hearts. The love of money and of pleasure will fade and vanish when men discover the superior worth of true righteousness. God's manifest residence in the Church will win the homage of all the nations. "Then shall the heathen know," etc.—D.

Vers. 1—12.—*From death to life.* The primary reference of this prophecy is placed beyond all doubt by the passage itself (see ver. 12). 1. Israel was in a forlorn and hopeless condition in her dispersion and captivity; she seemed to be irrecoverably lost; as a nation she was as one dead, if not buried. 2. But God had a gracious purpose concerning her. He intended to exercise his Divine power on her behalf; the dead should be revived; the lost should be found; the scattered should be restored and united. 3. That which seemed so hopeless is seen to be accomplished; instead of "a valley full of bones" (ver. 1) is "an exceeding great army" (ver. 10); instead of a "lost hope" (ver. 4) is a revived and recovered nation (ver. 12). The true analogue to this vision of the prophet is the revival of the lost and dead human soul under the renewing and inspiring power of the Spirit of God. What is suggested here on this vital theme is—

I. THE FATAL AND HOPELESS CONDITION TO WHICH SIN REDUCES US. Could we see our sin-stricken humanity as it appears in the sight of God, then where now we look upon fair scenes and shows of beauty or activity, we should see a "valley full of dry bones"—a valley of death. Let "*the dead* bury their dead," said the Master. "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth," said his apostle. To be separated from God in thought and sympathy; to be living in selfishness, in vanity, in sin; to be forfeiting our fair heritage of righteousness and holy service, and to lose our life in human gratifications or earthly acquisitions;—this is to be lost to God and wisdom; it is to have entered at least the outer shadows of the valley of death; and when sin has done its worst, when it has led the man or the community down to its nethermost abyss, then is he (or it) in such a state of spiritual deathfulness and hopelessness that all recovery seems impossible, as impossible as for a great mass of dry and disparted bones scattered on some broad valley to be readjusted and to be reanimated with life. "Can these bones live?" "No," human intelligence replies, "they are dead beyond all recovery." Yet is it well to remember that "the things which are impossible to man are possible with God;" and it is well to make reply, as in the text, "O Lord God, thou knowest." For God's reply is not in the negative. He summons to activity; and we have—

II. THE THREEFOLD AGENCY CALLED INTO EXERCISE. 1. *The human teacher.* "He said unto me, Prophesy," etc. (ver. 4). "So I prophesied as I was commanded" (ver. 7). It is the bounden duty, the sacred privilege, of the human teacher—in the house, in the sanctuary, in the school, in the street, anywhere and everywhere that men will listen—to summon the lost ones to return, the fallen to rise, the slumbering to awake and to return unto the Lord their God. 2. *The sinful souls themselves.* "As I prophesied there was a noise, and behold a shaking," etc. (ver. 7). Men may seem as dead, and in a sadly serious sense they may *be* "dead in sin;" yet they are not so absolutely lifeless that there is no possible response in them when the word of Divine truth is spoken. On the contrary, they *will* respond; there is the spiritual movement which begins in being aroused, and which ends in the actual return of the heart unto its Divine Father, and its entrance into eternal life. 3. *The Divine Spirit.* "Prophesy unto the wind . . . breathe upon these slain, that they may live" (ver. 9). What the breathing wind in the prophet's image wrought, that now works the Holy Spirit of God. Vain the words of the teacher, the movement of the fallen and lost spirit, without the renewing and reviving energy that comes from God. But that does come. God waits to work with us and for us; and when there is honest effort accompanied with earnest prayer, the breath of the Divine Spirit is not wanting; then comes—

III. THE BLESSED ISSUE IN NEWNESS OF LIFE. "They lived, and stood up . . . an exceeding great army [or 'force']" (ver. 10). The glorious issue of this agency, human and Divine, is (1) *life*,—life in God's view, life in God, life unto God, life now and evermore with God; it is (2) *largely extended* life,—an exceeding great army, innumerable, stretching over all lands and through all the centuries; it is (3) *powerful* life,—the word translated "army" might be rendered "force." The "multitude of them that believe," and that have life by faith in Jesus Christ, should be a great *force* or power for good. If it did but realize its resources, and knew how strong it was in Christian truth and the power of God which is at command, it would do far "greater works" than any it has yet accomplished for its Master and for mankind.—C.

Ver. 11.—*The cry of the hopeless.* "Our hope is lost: we are cut off to ourselves" (Fairbairn's translation); *i.e.* we are "cut off from the source of power and influence, and abandoned to ourselves." Taking these words apart from their connection (though quite in accordance with their spirit and tenor), our attention is directed to—

I. THE HOPELESS, BECAUSE THE ABANDONED. Many are they who have had, or still have, occasion to utter this most sad exclamation. It has been: 1. The remnant of a moribund race; or a dishonoured community (like Israel in Egypt or in Babylon); or a people held in hopeless slavery or a company of men and women doomed to lifelong exile (Cayenne or Siberia). 2. Individuals, or families, or small groups of those who have once cherished hopes, perhaps high hopes, of a happy life, but who find themselves hopeless, cut off, away from all their resources, abandoned to themselves, with nothing but misery and death in view; it may be the marooned or castaway, left on some lonely island to pine and die; or it may be the condemned felon when the last effort to obtain a reprieve has failed; or it may be the family in the great city allowed to perish for lack of food; or it may be the helpless straggler whom the army has left behind to fall into the hands of a barbarous enemy. Sad and pitiable in the last degree is the fate of those who have to lament that they are "cut off (and abandoned) to themselves." Distinguished from these are: 3. The spiritually hopeless. Those who are perplexed and distressed in heart, because (1) they cannot satisfy their minds as to the reality of sacred truths, as to the soundness of Christian doctrine; or because (2) they cannot find the peace and rest of heart they have been long seeking; or because (3) they fancy that they have sinned beyond forgiveness and restoration. These souls cannot find the help they need; it seems to them that "no man careth for their soul," or can enter into their feelings, or go down to the dark depths of their necessity. They do not know what to do in their extremity; everything and every one has failed them; their "hope is perished;" they are "cut off" and abandoned.

II. THEIR ONE RESOURCE. When man fails us, we can turn to God and trust in him. In him the helpless and the hopeless find their Refuge. "I am alone, and yet not alone, for the Father is with me," said our Lord. And many thousands of his disciples have gained relief where their Master sought and found it. The great and supreme fact that God "remembered us in our low estate;" that when we were as a race utterly undone, "cut off" from all resources, with no hope whatever in man, he had compassion on us, and stooped to save us;—this is the strong, unfailing assurance that God will not desert us, even though we abandon one another. However low be our condition, and in whatever sense we may be hopeless, we may confidently count upon (1) the near presence of God; (2) the tender sympathy of our Divine Friend; (3) his gracious and timely succour. This will come to us, indeed, in his own time and way, which may not be after our choice or according to our expectation. But *it will come;* for it is quite impossible that the eternal Father will abandon his children, that the once-crucified and now exalted Saviour will leave to their fate those for whom he died, and who turn earnest eyes to him for help and for salvation.—C.

Vers. 21—28.—*The blessed kingdom.* Understanding this Divine promise to find its true and complete fulfilment in the kingdom of Christ, we may recognize some of the features of that kingdom as it will one day be constituted.

I. ITS ONE ACKNOWLEDGED HEAD. The ideal "David" (vers. 24, 25) is found, not in any future ruler like Judas Maccabæus, but in Jesus Christ; in him who is exalted "to be a Prince and a Saviour," the Lord and Sovereign of his people everywhere. A

far Greater than David is he (see homily on ch. xxxiv. 23, 24). He will have no rival in the day of the Lord, when all the Churches of Christ shall know and love the truth, and exalt him in the eyes of the world.

II. ITS UNITY. (Vers. 21, 22.) The time will come when the Divine Head of the Church will look down upon a united people. There may be a great variety of organizations, but there will be no discord or disunion; none, because, while there will be no uniformity of method, but every order of spiritual life, there will be everywhere prevalent the *spirit of a benignant charity*, of Christ-like confidence, and love; all Churches and all hearts owning one Saviour, teaching one redeeming truth, breathing one spirit, living one life, moving towards one goal, and looking for one prize.

III. ITS HOLINESS. (Ver. 23.) There shall be nothing to defile. What the entire absence of idolatry signified in the case of Israel is realized by the Church in the absence of all worldliness and iniquity of every kind from its pale. It is "cleansed" by the truth and power of God, so that vice and violence, oppression and injustice, covetousness and selfishness, uncharitableness and inconsiderateness, are banished from its midst.

IV. ITS GLORIOUS MAGNITUDE. "I will multiply them." If the largest promises made to Israel had been fulfilled to the letter, that fulfilment would have been small and slight indeed when compared with the realization they have had in the establishment and the growth of the Church of Christ. And it is extending its borders still, indeed much more rapidly now than in any century but the first. It has attained to a noble magnitude, and will "multiply and still increase," until that little stone of Nebuchadnezzar's dream shall have rolled and grown till it "fills the whole earth."

V. ITS JOY IN GOD. God's "sanctuary is to be in the midst." His "tabernacle shall be with them." He will "be their God, and they shall be his people" (vers. 26, 27). The picture is one of happy, holy converse between God and man. It is a great thing for a nation to rejoice because the Holy One is near, is known and felt to be near. In the "glorious future time," when the kingdom of Christ shall be established on the earth, it will be the very near presence of God that will be felt to be the source of the deepest satisfaction, of the largest and truest enrichment. To be with him, coming into his nearer presence in all the ordinances of religion, to live in the spirit and habitude of devotion, to walk with God all the day long, to be guests at his table, to lift up the face unto him as unto the heavenly Father, to lean on Christ as on the unfailing Friend of the heart and life,—this is the heritage of the good in the blessed kingdom of our Lord.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The present and the following chapters, comprising the next oracle, or "word of God," delivered by the prophet, relate to the expedition (ch. xxxviii. 1—13), overthrow (vers. 14—23), and destruction of Gog (ch. xxxix. 1—20), with the results of the same to the heathen world and to Israel (vers. 21—29). Attempts to identify Gog and his armies with particular nations, as *e.g.* with the Chaldeans (Ewald), the Scythians (Knobel, Hitzig), the Greeks under Antiochus Epiphanes (Grotius), and even the Turks (Luther), have not been and are not likely to be successful. Either the highly idealized picture the prophet sketches was designed, as Hengstenberg thinks, to sum up and present in one great battle-piece all the conflicts which, throughout subsequent centuries, the restored and united Israel should have to maintain against the heathen world; or it was intended, as Hävernick, Keil, and others believe, to point to one closing struggle, in which the world's hostility to the Church of God should culminate, and in which it should be utterly and finally broken. In favour of this latter view stand the facts that by the prophet the uprising of Gog is located in "the latter days," and by the author of the Apocalypse, who seems to allude to the same event, the last battle between the powers of evil and the Church of God is placed immediately before the final judgment and the emergence of the new heavens and the new earth (Rev. xx. 8).

Vers. 1—13.—The announcement of Gog's expedition against Israel.

Ver. 1.—**The word of the Lord came unto me.** Although this oracle is unaccompanied by any note of time, it was obviously delivered before the twenty-fifth year of the Captivity (ch. xl. 1), and most likely in immediate succession to the preceding prophecy, with which also it has a close relation in respect of purport, being designed to show that against restored and united Israel, *i.e.* against the Church of God of the future, the strongest combinations of hostile force would not prevail, but would fall back defeated and self-destroyed.

Ver. 2.—**Set thy face against** (or, *toward*) **God.** Although occurring in 1 Chron. v. 4 as the name of a Reubenite, Gog was probably a title formed by Ezekiel himself from the word *Magog*, the syllable *ma* being treated as equivalent to "land." A similar freedom appears to have been exercised by the author of the Apocalypse, who out of Magog, here a territorial designation, makes a military power co-ordinate with Gog (Rev. xx. 8). That Gog was not an actual person—though the name reminds one of that of the Lydian king Gyges, as it appears on the monuments, *Gu-gu*, *Gu-ug-gu*, and of that of one *Sa-gi*, or *Sa-agi*, the ruler of another Eastern territory not yet identified (see Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament,' p. 427; and comp. 'Records of the Past,' first series, vol. ix. 46)—but an ideal character, must be held as proved by the composite structure of his army, which was drawn from the four corners of the globe, as well as by the highly imaginative texture of the whole prophecy, which, as Hengstenberg properly remarks, has a thoroughly "utopian [perhaps better, 'ideal'] character," showing that it moves "in the region of holy fancy." The words, **the land of Magog**, are not, with Hävernick, Ewald, and Smend, to be interpreted as the local or geographical terminus of the prediction, as if the word of God had said, "Set thy face toward Gog, toward the land of Magog;" but, with the majority of expositors, as a territorial designation signifying that Gog was in or of the land of Magog, which is here marked with the article, probably to identify it with the well-known Magog mentioned in Gen. x. 2, along with Tubal and Mesech as among the descendants of Japheth. From the circumstance that in the table of nations Magog stands between Gomer (the Cimmerians) and Madai (the Medians), and that Gomer appears in Gog's army, it has been not unreasonably concluded that to Ezekiel Magog represented a fierce Northern tribe, most likely, as Josephus ('Ant.,' i. 6. 1) asserts, the Scythians, whose territories lay upon the borders of the sea of Azov and in the Caucasus. Plumptre even thinks that, "placed as Ezekiel was, he may well have come into contact with these Scythian tribes, either as part of Nebuchadnezzar's army or by a journey on his part into the regions north of Ararat" ('Ezekiel: an Ideal Biography,' *Expositor*, vol. viii. p. 291, second series). Yet, could both of these hypotheses be established, it would not follow that Ezekiel was thinking merely, as Knobel and Gesenius suppose, of a future struggle which Israel should have to maintain against these *gentes Scythicas immanes et innumerabiles*, as Jerome in his day described them. In addition to being named from his land, Gog is further distinguished by the peoples over whom he rules, Ezekiel styling him **the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal**—a translation adhered to by Hengstenberg, Ewald, and Smend; or, according to the LXX., which most expositors and the Revised Version follow, *the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal*. The former rendering is obtained by interpreting נְשִׂיא רֹאשׁ after the analogy of הַכֹּהֵן רֹאשׁ, "chief priest," or "minister," in 1 Chron. xxvii. 5; and is supported by a similar use of the word *rosh* on coins under the government of the Persian satraps; yet the second rendering is not devoid of considerations that may be urged in its favour. Besides being grammatically possible, it yields a sense which is not improbable. Byzantine and Arabian writers of the tenth century were acquainted with a people called *οἱ Ῥῶς*, who were Scythian mountaineers, dwelling north of the Taurus, on the shores of the Black Sea and on the banks of the Volga. The Koran speaks of a land of Ras not far from the Araxes. Whether either of these can be connected with present-day Russians, as Gesenius suggests—an hypothesis which Hengstenberg protests deals hardly with the poor Russians—must be left undecided. So must the question whether the people inquired after can be identified, as Delitzsch suggests, with the inhabitants of the land of Rasch (*mât Ra-a-si*) of the Inscriptions, which was situated on the confines of Elam on the Tigris (see Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament,' p. 427; and comp. 'Records of the Past,' vol. ix. p. 84, ll. 122, 124). At the same time, Jerome's objection will scarcely hold good against understanding Rosh as the name of a people, viz. that the Bible elsewhere has no knowledge of any such people, since, as Hävernick observes, "one cannot know beforehand whether to Ezekiel, in his then place of abode, the knowledge of such a people was not likely sooner to come than to any Old Testament writer," and it is certain that the Book of Ezekiel is not wanting in names that occur only once, as *e.g.* Chilmad (ch. xxvii. 23) and Chub (ch. xxx. 5). Hitzig points out that in Gen. x.,

along with Mesech and Tubal, is mentioned a third nation, *Tiras*, which Von Hammer has attempted to connect with Rosh; while Schröder sees in Rosh (allied to *ross*, "horse") an indication that the people were equestrian in their habits, like the Scythians. The other peoples, Meshech and Tubal, were undoubtedly the Moschians and Tibarenes, who, according to Herodotus (iii. 94; vii. 78), dwelt south of the Black Sea.

Ver. 3.—**I am against thee, O Gog.** Just because Gog was against Israel, Jehovah was against Gog. Gog's invasion of Israel's land would be a declaration of war against Israel's God, so that the conflict would rather be between Jehovah and Gog than between Israel and Gog. Hence throughout this prophecy Jehovah is represented as the principal actor on the side of Israel, who seeks her defence not in walls and bulwarks or in earthly alliances and military combinations, as in the days of the monarchy before the exile, but in the presence of Jehovah in her midst.

Ver. 4.—**I will turn thee back.** שׁוֹכַכְתִּיךָ (pilel of שׁוּב, and signifying "to cause to return") has by Hitzig, Hävernick, Ewald, and Keil, been interpreted in the sense of "enticing," "misleading," decoying to a dangerous enterprise, as in Isa. xlvii. 10; but the ordinary meaning seems sufficient, that Jehovah would turn him back from his own self-devised career, or turn him about like a wild beast, putting hooks into his jaws (comp. ch. xxix. 4; 2 Kings xix. 28; Isa. xxxvii. 29), and so compelling him to follow the lead of a power superior to himself. It is as evident that a turning back from the Holy Land cannot be intended, as it is that a turning back to the Holy Land is unsuitable, unless, with Hengstenberg and Ewald, one regards Gog as the Chaldeans, or, with Hitzig, and Schröder, as the Scythians, though these latter never were in Palestine, having left it unvisited in their campaign in B.C. 626, and had not as yet formed the design of invading Israel. Smend is not wide of the mark in suggesting that the thought expressed in the verb is simply that of the superior might of Jehovah. **I will bring thee forth.** That the power which stirs up Gog is here represented as that of Jehovah, while in Rev. xx. 8 it is affirmed to be that of Satan, need occasion no more difficulty than the similar statements, in 1 Sam. xxiv. 1, about God and in 1 Chron. xxi. 1 about Satan, stirring up David to number Israel. The enumeration of horses and horsemen in Gog's army points to the Scythians, who, according to Herodotus (iv. 46, 136), were mostly equestrian tribes, although the Scythian remains discovered at Kertch do not give an example of a Scythian horse-archer (see Rawlinson's 'Herodotus,' vol. iii. p. 34, note 6). **All of them clothed with all sorts of armour, better, *clothed with perfection*,** i.e. splendidly attired, *all of them*. A characteristic of the Assyrian army (comp. ch. xxiii. 12; Nah. ii. 3). The arms of the warlike host—**a great company, as in ch. xvii. 17 (comp. Rev. xx. 8, "the number of whom is as the sand of the sea")** —are described as consisting of bucklers, or shields large enough to cover the whole of the soldier, and not so suitable for cavalry as for infantry (comp. ch. xxiii. 24); **shields, *i.e.* bucklers of smaller size than the preceding, such as Assyrian warriors were accustomed to carry (Sayce, 'Assyria, its Princes, Priests, and People,' p. 126); and swords,** or weapons for laying waste. The Assyrian soldiery employed "the short dagger, or dirk, and the sword, which was of two kinds. The ordinary kind was long and straight, the less usual kind being curved, like a scimitar" ('Assyria, its Princes,' etc.). In connection with the allied nations in ver. 5, only the small "shield" and "helmet" are mentioned.

Vers. 5—7.—These allied nations are depicted as coming from the four quarters of the globe. **Persia** (see ch. xxvii. 10), from the east; **Ethiopia** (see ch. xxx. 5), or ***Cush*** (Gen. x. 6), from the south; **Libya,** or ***Phut*** (see ch. xxvii. 10; xxx. 5), from the west; and **Gomer** (see Gen. x. 2, 3; 1 Chron. i. 5), the Cimmerians of Homer ('Odyss.,' xi. 13—19), whose abodes were the shores of the Euxine and Caspian Seas, and the ***Gimirrai*** of the Assyrian Inscriptions (see Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften,' etc., p. 80); with **the house of Togarmah, from the** north, or the extreme regions of the north, as in Isa. xiv. 13 (see ch. xxvii. 14). The first three are portrayed as armed **with shield and helmet,** or more accurately as being ***all of them shield and helmet***, which might signify that they should serve as a shield and helmet to Gog, who in turn should be unto them and their confederates **a guard;** *i.e.*, according to Keil and Schröder, one who keeps watch over them; according to Michaelis and Hävernick, one who gives them law; according to Hengstenberg, one who is their authority; according to Ewald and Smend, one who serves to them as an ensign, *i.e.* acts to them as a leader or commander. The LXX. translation, with which Hitzig agrees, "And thou shalt be to me for a guard," is manifestly wrong.

Ver. 8.—**After many days thou shalt be visited.** The principal controversy raised by these words is as to whether they signify, as Hitzig, Fairbairn, and Kliefoth suppose, that after many days Gog should be entrusted with the command of the aforementioned nations, or, as Ewald, Hengstenberg, Keil, Schröder, Plumptre, and Currey trans-

late, that Gog, who intended to visit Israel, should himself be visited, in the sense of being punished. In support of the former rendering appeal is taken to Neh. vii. 1; xii. 44; and Jer. xv. 3; but the verb פָּקַד when used in this sense is commonly followed by עַל with the accusative of that or those with reference to which or whom the appointment is made or commission issued, and in addition no such commission with reference to these other nations was ever given by God to Gog. In vindication of the second meaning of the words, Isa. xxiv. 22 and xxix. 6 are ordinarily quoted; while in answer to the objection that it is too soon to talk of punishment for an offence not yet committed, it is customary to reply that, as Jehovah's stirring up of Gog was the first step towards his ultimate overthrow, that stirring up might fairly be described as at least the beginning of his judicial visitation. Hävernick's translation, "For a long time thou wilt be missed," *i.e.* considered as a people that has utterly vanished," is forced; Smend's is better, "After many days thou shalt be mustered," or numbered. In any case Gog's first movement should take place **in the latter years**; literally, *at the end of the years*—a frequent prophetic phrase (see Gen. xlix. 1; Numb. xxiv. 14; Isa. ii. 2; Dan. x. 14; Micah iv. 1), here denoting the Messianic era, and should assume the form of an invasion of the land of Israel, which is next described by a threefold characterization. (1) **As a land brought back from the sword**, not in the sense of its people having been made to desist from war, through being henceforth peacefully inclined (comp. Isa. ii. 4; Micah ii. 8), or of their having ceased to expect war, because of living ever after securely (ver. 11), but in that of having been recovered from its devastations (ch. vi. 3—5); (2) as a land whose inhabitants had been **gathered out of many nations**—a phrase, which while starting from and including the return from Babylon, manifestly looked beyond that event to the wider dispersion of Israel that should precede the final ingathering; and (3) as a land whose **mountains** had been **always waste**; literally, *for a waste continually*. If such was their condition prior to the return from captivity, it is undeniable that such has practically been their condition ever since, and such it is likely to continue to be, until the final ingathering of the dispersed of Israel.

Ver. 9.—**Like a storm, and like a cloud.** Gog's invasion, his "ascension," or "going up" (compare the Greek term ἀνάβασις for a military expedition), should be like a storm in its suddenness and violence, as in Prov. i. 27, and like a cloud in its threatening aspect and overshadowing nearness (see ver. 16; and comp. Jer. iv. 13). Taken together, the images suggest that Gog's invasion should burst forth suddenly, rage violently, spread quickly, alarm greatly, but cease finally. Storms roar and crash, alarm and destroy, but do not continue. Clouds diffuse gloom and fear, but ultimately disperse.

Ver. 10.—**Thou shalt think an evil thought**; "conceive a mischievous purpose" (margin); or, *devise an evil device* (Revised Version). The ultimate responsibility for Gog's expedition should rest on Gog himself, who should be impelled thereto by his own lust of conquest. Ezekiel here recognizes what the Bible is full of, the duality of existence, according to which man is both a free agent, acting out his own thoughts and plans, and an unconscious instrument in the hands of God carrying out his counsels and designs.

Vers. 11, 12 give voice to the things that should come into Gog's mind and incite him to his enterprise against Israel. The spectacle of Israel dwelling safely, *i.e.* securely and confidently, in a **land of unwalled villages**—literally, *a land of open places*, as opposed to fortified cities—*i.e.* of towns **without walls**, and **having neither bars nor gates** (comp. Zech. ii. 4, 5; Deut. iii. 5; 1 Sam. vi. 18), because of being no more apprehensive of invasion, should excite within his bosom the thought that Israel would fall an easy prey to his assault; and this thought again should kindle in his bosom the lust of conquest which should finally impel him to the sinful project described, viz. *to take a spoil and to take a prey*; literally, *to spoil the spoil* (comp. ch. xxix. 19; Isa. x. 6) *and to prey the prey* (Isa. xxxiii. 23). In execution of this he would fall upon the once desolate but then inhabited places, upon the once scattered but then collected population, upon the previously poor but then wealthy inhabitants, who should then have gotten **cattle and goods** (*cattle* and *chattel* best renders the Hebrew paronomasia, *mikneh v'kinyan*), as the patriarchs of their nation had once done (Gen. xxxiv. 23; xxxvi. 6), and who should then be dwelling **in the midst of the land**; literally, *in the height*, or, *navel* (LXX., Vulgate), *of the earth* (comp. Judg. ix. 37), the Hebrews generally regarding Palestine as the Greeks did Delphi, both as the middle (ch. v. 5) and perhaps therefore, if not as the highest (Gesenius), at least as the fairest and most fertile portion of the earth.

Ver. 13.—**Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish** were the great trading communities of the South, East, and West respectively (see on ch. xxvii. 15, 20, 22, 25). **The young lions thereof**—*i.e.* of Tarshish, not of the other communities (Keil)—were probably intended to represent,

not the "authorities" of Tarshish, as Hitzig suggests, but its smaller tradesmen who were equally rapacious with its larger merchants. All are depicted as following in the wake of Gog, like vultures in the rear of an army, and as inquiring whether Gog had come simply for the purpose of destruction or in the hope of trading with the booty he should capture. In this case they intimate their wish to be partakers of the spoil. This (Plumptre), rather than the thirst for booty which characterized them (Keil), their question to Gog signified; Schröder's idea, that they purposed ironically to ridicule the smallness of the spoil which would reward so gigantic an expedition, has as little to recommend it as Kliefoth's suggestion, that they designed to intimate their sympathy with Gog's invasion of Israel.

Vers. 14—23.—The prophet is next directed to assure Gog of four things, (1) that in the latter days he should come up against Israel as predicted (vers. 14—16); (2) that he should not do so without Divine observation, permission, and direction (vers. 16, 17); (3) that nevertheless Jehovah's indignation should flame forth against him (ver. 18); and (4) that Jehovah would magnify himself in his destruction.

Ver. 14.—**Shalt thou not know it?** viz. that Israel is dwelling safely and unsuspectingly? Assuredly; because the barbarian chieftain will then be on the watch, as it were, to spy out Israel's defenceless condition, and to fix upon the most opportune moment for an assault. The LXX. read, "Shalt thou not arise?" Οὐκ . . . ἐγερθήσῃ; and following it, both Hitzig and Ewald, without other justification, change תֵּדָע into תָּקוּם, "Wilt thou bestir thyself?"

Ver. 15.—**All of them riding upon horses** (see on ver. 4; and comp. ch. xxiii. 6; xxvi. 7; Jer. vi. 23; and Amos ii. 15). The Scythians are said to have been able to eat, drink, and sleep in the saddle (Schröder).

Ver. 16.—**I will be sanctified in thee, O Gog.** Jehovah meant that in taking vengeance upon Gog for assailing Israel, he would be seen to be a holy and a righteous God.

Ver. 17.—**Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time?** As no existing prophecy, prior to Ezekiel's time, mentions Gog by name, it must be concluded either (1) that Ezekiel refers to prophecies known in his day, though no longer extant; or (2) that his words simply mean that earlier prophets had predicted such an invasion of Israel in the last times as that which he announces under the leadership of Gog. The former opinion, though countenanced by Ewald, Kuenen, and Smend, is less probable than the latter, which expositors both ancient and modern favour. Schröder considers the hypothesis that earlier prophets had spoken of Gog by name as excluded by the interrogatory form of the sentence, since, had Gog been thus explicitly pointed out, there would, he thinks, have been no need to ask, "Art thou he?" But it is doubtful if the interrogatory form of the words had any other intention than to lend emphasis to the assertion that Gog was he to whom the earlier prophets had unconsciously referred. As to which earlier prophets he alluded opinions vary. Ewald cites Isa. x. 6; xvii. 4; Smend adding Micah v. 11; Zeph. iii. 8; Keil, Isa. xxv. 5, 10; Jer. xxx. 23, 25; Joel iv. 2, 11, etc.; Hengstenberg, Deut. xxxii.; Isa. xxiv.—xxvii.; xxxiv.; and Fairbairn, Numb. xxiv. 17—24; Isa. xiv. 28—32; xviii.; Joel iii.; Dan. ii. 44, 45; though Schröder is probably correct in holding that all should be included which represent the hostility of the heathen world as culminating in the latter days in a grand concentrated attack upon Israel. Smend sees in the unusual phenomenon that Ezekiel reflects upon earlier prophecies an indication of the declining spirit of prophetism; it should, however, rather be regarded as a sign of superior spiritual insight on the part of Ezekiel, who could discern that from the first the prophets had been guided in their utterances by One who was intimately acquainted with the whole world-programme, and knew the end from the beginning, so that however dark and enigmatical their predictions might be when taken separately, when viewed in connection they were recognized as forming parts of a harmonious whole.

Vers. 18—20.—Vers. 18 and 19 are not, as Hitzig, Kliefoth, and others explain, on the ground of the perfect, "I have spoken" (ver. 19), which, however, is rather a prophetical present—a free recapitulation of the earlier predictions, but a direct announcement through Ezekiel that when Gog should arrive upon the scene Jehovah should take the field against him, so that he should have to fight against Jehovah rather than against Israel. The expression, **my fury shall come up in my face**; or, *my wrath ascends in my nose*, has parallels in ch. xxiv. 8; Ps. xviii. 9; and Deut. xxxii. 22, and describes the vehement breathing (inhalation and exhalation) of an angry man through his nose. **The fire of Jehovah's wrath** (comp. ch. xxi. 36; xxxvi. 5) should make itself known in that day by **a great shaking in the land of Israel**, which can hardly, as Kliefoth surmises, refer to the final judgment, or, as Keil thinks, to the

trembling of the whole earth, with all the creatures, before the Lord, who comes to judgment, as in Joel iv. 16 and Zech. xiv. 4, 5, since the locality in which this convulsion of nature is to happen is expressly defined as "the land of Israel;" but must be understood, with Schröder and Smend, as a figurative description of the terrible overthrow which Jehovah should inflict upon Gog, and which should produce within the heathen mind a feeling of consternation, as if the whole fabric of the globe were falling into ruin. Grounding upon what occurred at Sinai (Exod. xix. 16—18), Hebrew writers generally depicted special interpositions of Jehovah as being witnessed to and accompanied by awe-inspiring natural convulsions (comp. Ps. xviii. 7, 15; xlvi. 2, 3; lx. 2; Isa. xiii. 9—13; xxiv. 19—22; Jer. iv. 23—26; Nah. i. 5; Zech. xiv. 4); and in the same manner does Ezekiel delineate Jehovah's intervention in behalf of Israel and against Gog, as so alarming that all living creatures, irrational as well as rational—**fishes of the sea, fowls of the heaven, beasts of the field, creeping things that creep upon the earth** (or, *ground—adamah*), **and men upon the face of the earth**; or, *ground* (comp. Gen. i. 26; vii. 21—23)—should shake at its accompanying manifestations, and that even the mightiest objects in nature, **such as the mountains, steep places,** or, "rock-clefts" (Ewald), such elevations as can only be ascended by means of steps as by a ladder (comp. Cant. ii. 14), and **walls** (comp. Jer. xv. 20), including natural ramparts as well as humanly constructed erections, should be overthrown (ver. 20).

Ver. 21.—**Every man's sword shall be against his brother** (comp. Zech. xiv. 13). The consternation produced by Jehovah's interposition should be such that the ranks of Gog should fall into utter confusion, and his warriors exterminate each other, as did the Midianites in the days of Gideon (Judg. vii. 22), and the Moabites, Ammonites, and Seirites, who invaded Judah in the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx. 23).

Vers. 22, 23.—**Pestilence and blood** (comp. ch. v. 17; xiv. 19; xxviii. 23) . . . **an overflowing rain and great hailstones**—literally, *stones of ice* (comp. ch. xiii. 11, 13)—**fire, and brimstone**, or, *pitch* (comp. Gen. xix. 24). The imagery here brought together was probably borrowed from the accounts given in the Pentateuch of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. xix. 24), of the plagues in Egypt (Exod. vii.—x.), and of the extermination of the Canaanites (Josh. x. 11). The result of the whole would be to impress the minds of many nations with the conviction that Israel's God was both great and powerful, that, in fact, he was God alone.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—4.—*Gog and Magog.* If we take these names as representing the Scythians and their king, we have a description of God's judgment of the most wild and remote heathen tribes and of their relation to Israel.

I. THE BIBLE IS FOR ALL NATIONS. It contains a message even for Gog and Magog—it is intended to reach the Scythians. It has to do with all people in the world. The Hebrew prophet was not permitted to narrow his thoughts to the parochial mind. His vision was world-wide. A Jew of the Jews, he was nevertheless a preacher to mankind. Much more is the Christian apostle a preacher to all men. Here is a great motive for circulating the Scriptures among all nations.

II. GOD HAS DEALINGS WITH ALL PEOPLE. His influence extends to Gog and Magog. God's hook will be put in the jaws of the distant prince. The heathen are under God's notice and affected by his supreme authority. To be far from the Church of God is not to be far from the power of God. The ends of the earth feel his great energy. The arms of God are long. This is a reason for our seeking to enlighten the most remote and heathenish people; for they all belong by right to God.

III. GOD TAKES ACCOUNT OF SAVAGES. The Scythians of ancient times were about the wildest known people; they were to the Easterns of the past what the cannibals of Central Africa are to modern Europeans. It was difficult to make civilized nations feel that they belonged to the same species with such wild men of the Northern forests. Yet God knew these people. God does not ignore the most degraded savages. They, too, are naturally made in the image of God. Judged according to their poor, obtuse, perverted consciences, even they will have to give account to the God of all. They are not responsible for the ignorance and degradation in which they are born, and surely God will deal very leniently with these unhappy races. Yet for their acknowledged evil even they must be punished. But if there is a judgment of Gog, much

more must there be a judgment of Israel; if the savages of Africa must give an account of the deeds done in the body, much more must the Christians of Europe appear before the judgment-seat of God.

IV. CHRISTIANITY BRINGS A GOSPEL OF SALVATION AND UNION FOR ALL NATIONS. It even includes Gog and Magog in its gracious outlook; for St. Paul taught that the Scythians were to share in the common brotherhood of the Christian Church (Col. iii. 11). 1. *The gospel is suited to the lowest heathen.* This fact is proved by its effects. While the dreamer at home pronounces the Christianizing of savages to be an impossibility, the worker in the missionary field answers effectually by quietly accomplishing the so-called impossible feat. Charles Darwin was so struck with the good work of missionaries in civilizing the inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego, whom he regarded as about the most degraded savages on the face of the earth, that he subscribed to the society from which the missionaries had gone forth. 2. *The gospel should be spread among the lowest heathen.* We have no excuse to despair of any. The very degradation of heathendom is a call to Christians for help. Rousseau's fancy of the innocence and happiness of the simple savage is not justified by experience. Oppressed with cruelty and superstition, degraded in uncleanness, the savage greatly needs the liberty and salvation of Christ.

Ver. 8.—"*After many days.*" Time is an element which needs to be taken into calculation in the consideration of all human affairs. We are too short-sighted, too hasty, too impatient. God has the leisure of eternity.

> "The mills of God grind slowly,
> But they grind exceeding small."

We must learn to use the telescopes of faith and hope, and look far beyond the scene of the present, if we would form a right estimate of any important human event.

I. THE MISCHIEF OF EVIL IS SEEN AFTER MANY DAYS. This would be a pertinent consideration in regard to the evil work of remote Gog and Magog. 1. *The mischief may be slow to develop.* At first men enjoy the pleasures of sin; the pains come later. Judgment is deferred. God is patient and long-suffering, and he gives ample time for repentance. Nevertheless, the accumulations of wrath will at length burst over the heads of the finally impenitent. 2. *The mischief may long endure.* It may last for many days. A hasty sin may be followed by a lengthy penalty. The crime of a moment may be punished with penal servitude for life. One man's wickedness may bring misery on generations.

II. THE FRUITS OF GOODNESS ARE SEEN AFTER MANY DAYS. Earnest men work, and yet see but little results coming from their labours; so that they seem to be labouring for nothing. Like the disciples who toiled all night and took nothing, perhaps they are ready to despair just when a grand reward is within their reach. We have to learn to work and wait, and to obey our Master's command even when we expect but little good to come from our labour.

III. THE HARVEST OF THE GOSPEL IS REAPED AFTER MANY DAYS. The Christian preacher may have to go forth weeping, but he bears precious seed. Therefore, though he sows in tears, he will reap in joy. What we have to remember is that our work is seed-sowing, not the planting of full-grown trees. The latter process would give us the more immediate results; but it would be the more precarious, for the trees would not be easily kept alive. Now, since our work is a sowing of seeds, necessarily it cannot produce visible results at once. The field that has been sown all over with the best seed looks at first much like one that has been left waste and neglected. The Christian preacher, the Sunday school teacher, the missionary, have all to sow in patience. Perhaps one may sow and another reap. A man may not live to gather the harvest of his labour; then his works will follow him (Rev. xiv. 13).

IV. THE BEST BLESSINGS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE ARE ENJOYED AFTER MANY DAYS. 1. *We may have to wait for them.* Some inestimable blessings may be had at once. We have no delay in receiving the pardon of our sins and the regeneration of our souls when we truly repent and yield ourselves to Christ. Still, "this is not your rest." We are not yet in heaven. The cross must now be carried; we must wait for the crown. 2. *They will endure for ever.* We shall have them after many days, and

after many days more these best blessings of God will still endure. The things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor. iv. 18). No moth nor rust corrupt the heavenly treasures. When all things on earth fade these shall abide, the everlasting inheritance of God's people.

Ver. 10.—"*An evil thought.*" I. AN EVIL THOUGHT MAY COME UNBIDDEN. "Things come into" the mind. Like a bird of passage from a distant continent, like a stray seed dropped into a well-tilled garden, like a breath of infection on a healthy person, evil may come from without unsought and even unsuspected. Every one must be conscious of the way in which a thought will flash into his mind. But often a suggestion of evil may come from some visible external thing. An evil sight will suggest an evil thought; therefore we need to pray that God may turn away our eyes from beholding vanity. Bad companions will prompt evil thoughts; therefore we have to be on our guard as to what society we frequent. We cannot but be in the world, though we should not be of it. Sights and sounds of evil assail us on every side—in visible occurrences, in conversation, in newspapers, in books. It is impossible to bar every avenue against the intrusion of an evil thought. It may come to the purest soul.

II. AN EVIL THOUGHT IS A DANGEROUS GUEST. The Americans and the Australians are much concerned at the character of persons who pour into their territories from the overflowing population of Europe. Hence their regulations setting conditions to the reception of emigrants. We cannot always prevent the incoming of evil thoughts, but we must beware of the mischief of their presence when they have come. 1. *An evil thought tends to spread.* It is like the little leaven that leavens the whole lump, like the worthless seed which, growing up, produces a host of new seeds, and so makes the weeds take possession of the soil. A striking idea starts a whole chain of thoughts. 2. *An evil thought tends to rouse an evil desire.* The active evil from without appeals to the latent evil within the soul. Thus while in one place St. James writes of Satan as our tempter (Jas. iv. 7), in another he says that we are tempted by our own evil desires (Jas. i. 14). The evil thought is most dangerous because it is lodged in an evil nature. Unhappily, the seed of evil falls on congenial soil. The germ of sin attacks one who has what the doctors would call a sinful *diathesis*, a temperament that is naturally prone to sin.

III. AN EVIL THOUGHT SHOULD BE QUICKLY EXPELLED. We cannot prevent its coming; but we may refuse to give it quarter. If we harbour it we consent to its presence, and take the guilt of it on ourselves. Thus we make it no longer a foreign intruder, but our own thought. The practical question is how may the evil thought be cast out? 1. *Directly, by resisting it.* We should pray against an evil thought, and firmly set our foot upon it when it has come near to us. 2. *Indirectly, by encouraging a better thought.* An empty mind is always ready to receive bad guests. The last state of the house from which the evil spirit was cast out became worse than the first, because, though it was swept and garnished, it was left empty (Matt. xii. 44). There are plants the very vigour of which, when they are once well established, will prevent the growth of weeds among them; in the struggle for existence they are stronger than the weeds. The presence of Christ in the heart is the best antidote to evil thoughts.

Ver. 14.—*The day of security.* I. THERE IS A DAY OF SECURITY. Then God's people dwell safely. We talk of the warfare of the Christian life. There is a lifelong war. But this is not a perpetual battle. There are lulls in the storm, and quiet seasons in the Christian contest. At such times there is a temptation to unreasonable ease and confidence, just as in times of trouble people are ready to despair and imagine that "all these things are against" them. Still, the day of security has its blessing, and if this is not abused it may be welcomed as helpful. 1. *It affords an opportunity for recovering strength.* The soldier cannot be always fighting. Repose is essential as a preparation for future exertion. 2. *It enables us to perform quiet work.* The whole of Christian experience is not covered by the idea of warfare. There are such things as working in the vineyard, fruit-bearing, building up the house of God, etc., which his servants have to attend to, and which can be best accomplished without distracting thoughts, in times of security. 3. *It offers us a foretaste of heavenly blessedness.*

Heaven is a safe place, and its blessed inhabitants dwell there securely. Their security, indeed, is sound and enduring; while ours on earth may be but brief and treacherous, like the calm on a mountain lake, which may be broken at any moment by a sudden squall. Still, while we enjoy the peace we may be thankful for it, and gratefully accept it as an earnest of that in the eternal home, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

II. THE SECURITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE IS OBSERVED BY THEIR FOES. Gog and Magog take note of the security of Israel and bestir themselves. Satan watches his opportunity, and often finds it best when the servants of God are quite confident in the sense of safety. The city gates are left open and the walls unmanned because no enemy is expected. The doors are unbolted at night because the householder never imagines that any burglar will visit his home. But these very signs of security tempt an attack, and, when it comes, give fatal facility to the enemy's projects. The *Eurydice* suddenly went down with all on board, when struck by a squall off the Isle of Wight, just because the fine weather had tempted the crew to leave all the port-holes open. It must have been observed by every one who has watched his own experience that seasons of spiritual peace and joy are commonly followed by times of severe temptation. Immediately after the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus he was led into the wilderness to be tempted. Peter's boast was swiftly followed by his denial of his Master. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12).

III. THE SECURITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE REVEALS THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF HIS SERVICE. Gog and Magog seem to take note of the security of Israel as beasts of prey observe the unsuspecting confidence of the game they are scenting; but they might also observe it with admiration, as Balaam did that of the tents of Israel (Numb. xxiv. 5), as Milton's Satan observed the peace and joy of the happy pair in Eden. If so, however, the prospect need not inspire despairing regrets as it did in Balaam (Numb. xxiv. 17), nor malignant envy as Milton represents it doing in Satan. The peace of God's people may be shared by all, for all may become God's people. Even Gog and Magog may enjoy the same security. Russia, the land of the ancient Scythians, became a Christian nation. We may see the calmness of Christian experience, and take it as a witness to the blessedness of the Christian privileges. Thus the gospel is preached by the very countenances of God's people.

Vers. 19, 20.—*An earthquake.* In the day of God's jealousy and wrath there is to be a great shaking of sea, air, and land, so that the very fishes and birds, as well as the beasts of the earth, will feel its shock.

I. AN EARTHQUAKE MAY OCCUR. There were once two opposed schools of geology—one believing that our earth had reached its present condition after successive violent catastrophes had wrought great and sudden changes on its surface; the other holding that the most striking results could be produced, and, therefore—on the principle that the minimum cause is the only one that one can affirm—have been produced, by the operation of the very forces which we now witness. This latter, the uniformitarian theory, has been so well established by Sir Charles Lyell, that few would now think of reviving the more dramatic hypothesis. Nevertheless, even this theory admits of many great and violent movements under the operation of present laws and forces. Earthquakes do now occur. So is it in the world of men. We are governed by orderly Divine laws. Yet we meet with great shocks in political changes, when empires topple to the dust; in social changes, when the old order is upset, as in the French Revolution; in domestic changes, when a man's quiet home-life is ruthlessly upset, and sudden poverty, or the death of those he loves most, or fearful family divisions, shake him like an earthquake. There are earthquakes in religion, when the old beliefs are shaken or the old practices disturbed. Such an earthquake occurred at the advent of Christ, at the Reformation, etc. There are also spiritual earthquakes in the breasts of individual men. The crust of self-confidence is widely torn, and great chasms opened in well-settled notions. Some day the easy-going sinner will be astonished at the earthquake shock that will disturb his misplaced confidence.

II. MEN SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR AN EARTHQUAKE. In countries where such an occurrence is frequent it is necessary to build the walls with especial solidity, and to bind them together with iron bands. Yet even there the lessons of experience fade

away in a season of long security. It is strange how villages creep up the sides of slumbering volcanoes which may at any moment overwhelm them in torrents of lava. We ought to be prepared for the coming of trouble, although all is now quiet and smiling. This does not mean that we should be "anxious about the morrow," for "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." But the best way to dismiss anxiety is to be well fortified against the possibility of disaster. If we would be prepared for the upset of our earthly home comforts, we need to have a deeper foundation on which to rest, so that when the things which are shaken are removed the things which cannot be shaken may remain (Heb. xii. 27).

III. AN EARTHQUAKE MAY BE A BLESSING IN DISGUISE. At first it is ruinous, and the destruction, misery, and death that it spreads make it appear as a huge calamity. But in changing the face of the earth it may prepare for a better future. Political and social earthquakes throw down old abuses and clear the ground for a new and better order. God upsets a man's life that he may lead the man to build afresh on a more sure foundation. Earthquakes in human affairs should make us look above the earth and have our treasure in heaven—"seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness."

Ver. 21.—*Mutual antagonism.* I. MUTUAL ANTAGONISM IS COMMON. In primitive times it was well-nigh universal. Pre-historic man seems to have lived in a state of perpetual warfare; and in the present day savages are often at war one with another; they maintain continuous feuds—tribe against tribe, clan against clan, family against family. In these later times, even in enlightened Christendom, Europe appears as an armed camp. Every nation is suspicious of its neighbour, which it regards as a possible enemy. The same miserable attitude of antagonism is held in the political world, though here it is generally found possible to avoid overt violence. Government by party means government in face of antagonism, for there is always "her Majesty's Opposition." Business life is maintained on the principle of mutual antagonism. The market is ruled by competition. Each house of business fiercely contends with its rivals for popular patronage. The relations between capital and labour have fallen into the same evil condition, and each side just fights for what it can seize at the expense of the other. Unhappily, the same spirit is observed in religion. When the Church should be engaged in conquering the world for Christ, she is consumed with internal discord and the contention of mutually excommunicating parties.

II. MUTUAL ANTAGONISM IS WRONG. It springs from an evil root—selfishness. War is the awful fruit of national selfishness. In public life the good of the people is too often sacrificed to the ambition of the politician or the interest of the party. Business is degraded into a horrible scramble of selfishness, in which each clutches at whatever he can lay hands on without actually transgressing the law. Religious selfishness is the worst form of selfishness, for it belies the faith it professes. In sheer bigotry the antagonism may be honest; but bigotry is largely inspired by a subtle, unsuspected self-regarding spirit.

III. MUTUAL ANTAGONISM MAY BE OVERRULED FOR GOOD. We see it in nature where no moral ideas have dawned, and where, therefore, no blame can be ascribed. The evolution of higher types of life is brought about by the struggle for existence, in which the strong kill out the weak, so that they only survive who are fittest for their habitat. No doubt national jealousy necessitates the maintenance of national vigour. Political partisanship keeps a watch on the government, and checks wrong-doing by a perpetual shower of criticisms. Competitive business cheapens produce for the consumer; it also stimulates invention and enterprise, and therefore encourages progress which monopoly paralyzes. Perhaps even in religious rivalry we may provoke one another to good works. These results cannot excuse selfishness, but they may show how God overrules it for a measure of good.

IV. MUTUAL ANTAGONISM CAN ONLY BE CAST OUT BY CHRISTIAN LOVE. Reasoning will not destroy selfishness. The only cure for war is the reign of Christ, the Prince of Peace. Internal peace can only be brought about by the influence of love in the hearts of men. Christ came to set up the kingdom of heaven on earth. One of the essential characteristics of this kingdom, as opposed to all earthly kingdoms, is that it does not appeal chiefly to self-regarding motives. It demands love of God and of

one's neighbour, and it inspires that love by the influence of the constraining love of Christ.

Ver. 23.—*God sanctifying himself.* I. AN EXPLANATION OF THE FACT. What is it for God to sanctify himself? Man is sanctified when he is set apart for God; and this sanctification is needed in the case of man because he has been alienated from God and devoted to the world. Further, in the case of man, sanctification involves purification, and perhaps the first thought that occurs to us when the word is mentioned is that sin is to be purged out of the heart, and holiness infused by the influence of the Holy Spirit. But now all these notions are inapplicable to God. He is the Lord, not the servant, and he is not, therefore, to be thought of as set apart for any purpose. He never failed in his position, and he does not need the recovery and re-dedication which we understand by sanctification. Lastly, he never sinned, and therefore he requires no purification. What, then, is meant by God sanctifying himself? The idea seems to be partly interpreted by the earlier phrase, "Thus will I magnify myself." God has not been rightly appreciated by men. His supreme majesty and his ineffable holiness have been slighted. The awful separateness of character which distinguishes between God and man has not been enough regarded. Thus, though God himself has remained unchanged as he is unchangeable, his *Name* has been profaned. When the Name of God is rescued and restored to its true place of honour, God is said to be sanctified.

II. A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS. If this is the sanctification of God, how is it brought about? We are here told that God accomplishes it himself. He is the great Sanctifier. He sanctifies his people by his Spirit. He says, "Thus will *I* magnify *myself*, and sanctify *myself*." 1. This is done by *revelation*. God manifests himself. His Name was dishonoured while his greatness was hidden. He unveils his glory, and then men are amazed to read his great Name. Thus it is rescued from degradation. 2. This is done in *judgments*. God comes down among defiant men and scatters his foes. The heathen once regarded him as on a level with their own gods. But now his supremacy and therefore his separateness are seen. Thus God is known among the nations and sanctified among men. 3. This is done in *spiritual experience*. The sanctification by judgments is an external process. It may arouse wonder and even create conviction, but it does not stimulate the veneration which includes love and true worship. But when God manifests himself to his people as he does not unto the world, his holiness and his goodness are brought home to them with a fresh force. 4. This is done *in the sanctification of God's people*. They are called upon to sanctify the Lord God in their hearts (1 Pet. iii. 15). When the heart is consecrated to God, God's holiness is confessed as it never was before. To be devoted to God is the way to recognize God's supreme glory.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—13.—*The invasion of those who dwell secure.* The occurrence in this place of this and the following chapters is somewhat perplexing. The events here prophetically described take place after the restoration of the Israelites from their Eastern captivity. Yet they are altogether too stupendous to be applicable to anything which happened in the time or soon after the time of Ezekiel. Thus many interpreters of prophecy refer them to a period still in the future, when a final struggle may take place between the Church of Christ and the powers of this world. The general moral and religious lessons of the passage are, however, independent of any special prophetical interpretation.

I. THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD'S FAVOUR DOES NOT INVOLVE PERFECT TRANQUILLITY. Israel had been restored from the East to the land of inheritance and promise. The hand of Divine retribution had been removed, and the hidden countenance of God had shone upon his people. But their troubles were not over; their land was not to remain in their undisturbed possession; Jerusalem was not to be the city of peace. This indicates a general principle of the Divine government. The Church of Christ is a ransomed Church, a chosen and beloved possession. But upon earth it is the Church militant; there is a warfare to be waged; this is not our rest. Even in the latest

period of this dispensation repose may be disturbed, enemies may arise, a conflict may be passed through. All this would be consistent with the favour and loving-kindness of the God of salvation.

II. SINFUL RAPACITY IS NOT DETERRED BY THE SIGNS OF DIVINE PROTECTION. Not a few of the enemies of Israel had been defeated and put to shame, whilst Israel had been spared, favoured, and exalted. He who questioned the power and kindness of Jehovah might well be pointed to the history of the Hebrew people. Yet, as a matter of fact, there were enemies of Israel and of God who, notwithstanding these apparent lessons, renewed their assaults upon the objects of Divine protection. Similarly, the Church of Christ is exposed to assaults open and insidious, physical and moral. The enemies of religion, if they have studied history, must be aware that Christ has built his Church upon a rock, and that the gates of Hades do not prevail against it. Yet they are not found to desist from their endeavours or to abate their hostility. Nor need the people of God expect to be exempt from "rude assaults of raging foes."

III. THE ENEMIES OF GOD'S PEOPLE, CONSCIOUS OF THEIR NUMBER AND THEIR POWER, REGARD THE APPARENTLY DEFENCELESS AS AN EASY PREY. The foe is described in these verses in a manner which depicts his formidable character. Gog and his auxiliaries and allies are represented as preparing for the attack, as mustering to make war upon those who are without the protection of walls, bars, or gates. The unwalled villages seem to invite the marauder, and he counts the cattle and goods, the silver and gold, as already a prey. In like manner, the foes of the Church, confident in their resources, relying upon the force of their arms, encourage one another in their hostile designs against the Church, by observing how defenceless she appears, and how open to the hostile attack and the crafty strategy of her foes. The weapons of her warfare are not carnal, and weapons of any other kind are beyond the comprehension of the foe.

IV. THE AGGRESSOR SHOULD REMEMBER THAT THE LORD OF ALL CAN CHECK AND DEFEAT THE ABLEST AND THE MIGHTIEST. If the Omnipotent do but say, "I am against thee," it matters not how formidable and vast are the hostile resources of the enemy. One word from his lips, one glance from his eye, is enough to put to confusion all the boasted power of the foe.

V. THE DEFENCELESS SHOULD REMEMBER THAT GOD IS ABLE IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES TO DEFEND AND TO DELIVER HIS OWN. The true security of Israel was in God's care; Jehovah was the Shield, the Stronghold of his people, and when they trusted in him they were safe. The Israel of God has a sure defence. "Fear not," says Jehovah; "I am with thee." The protection of the Church is not in the favour of kings or in the arm of the warrior; it is the eternal God who is our Refuge, and underneath us are the everlasting arms.—T.

Ver. 4.—*Divine control.* The picture of Israel's foes is indeed one fitted to strike dismay into any heart depending upon human aid, defence, or deliverance. Gog and his armies, the hostile nations in league with him, are described with all the pomp and circumstance of war. Yet, when Jehovah declares, "I will turn thee about, and will put hooks into thy jaws," this declaration outweighs all the professions, all the threats, all the designs of the enemy. We are reminded—and the whole Church in every age needs, in time of danger especially, to learn the lesson—that above all the plans and purposes of men there reigns *Divine control.*

I. IT IS LITTLE EXPECTED. When plans are laid, and evil designs matured, nothing is further from the mind of the enemies of God's people than the unquestionable fact that the Lord of all is supreme. Some poor, faint human opposition may be anticipated; but it is not expected that a superior Power should intervene.

II. IT IS HAUGHTILY SPURNED. Shall hooks be put into the jaws of the dragon? Shall the wild horse of the desert be bridled? Shall the lion of the jungle be tamed? The very thought is repudiated and resented. The mighty of the earth are not wont to brook restraint or interference. Those who plan the ruin of the cause of God, of the religion of Christ, of the Church on earth and all its agencies—whether they so plan in the name of atheism and secularism, or in the name of worldly policy—spurn and contemn the restraint of Heaven. They *see* no power which they need to fear, and in their view it is superstition to fear the unseen.

III. IT IS VARIOUSLY EXERCISED. Sometimes God controls the foe by natural causes and instrumentalities. The destroying angel comes down upon the camp and smites the host; pestilence decimates the bands of the enemy; an earthquake opens the prison-doors; the storm scatters the invader's fleet. Sometimes God controls the foe by human agency. One enemy of God makes war upon another, and cripples the forces which were on the point of being employed against the Lord's people. Or a great deliverer is raised up, whose valour and heroism crush the enemy, and set the threatened free from fear and danger. In any case God is never at a loss for means by which he may bring his counsels to pass.

IV. IT IS ALWAYS EFFECTUAL. The control of God may be defied by God's enemies, and it may be ignored or distrusted by his friends. But it exists, and it is superior to all earthly powers and machinations. Revelation is full of instances of this control as manifested in the history of Israel and in the history of the infant Church of Christ. And the annals of Christianity, through long centuries, contain abundant confirmation of the great and blessed truth—"the Lord reigneth."

V. IT SHALL BE FINALLY ACKNOWLEDGED. Here and now men may withhold the confession. But sooner or later it shall be publicly admitted that all powers are subject to the King of kings.—T.

Ver. 10.—*An evil device.* We have been taught by the Divine Master, Christ, that it is from within that human conduct takes its origin. It is the heart which is the source alike of good and of evil. The tree bears fruit, whether sound and wholesome and palatable, or harsh and useless; the living well, the fountain, sends forth streams, whether sweet and cheering, or bitter and polluted. So the thoughts, intents, and devices of the heart find their expression in the words which reach men's ears and in the deeds which draw men's eyes. God, who knew the inmost nature of men, as well as their individual and political acts, revealed the secret spring of the malicious efforts of the foes of Israel, saying, "It shall come to pass in that day, that things shall come into thy mind, and that thou shalt devise an evil device."

I. PASSION PROMPTS THE EVIL DEVICE. There is in all men's nature a principle assuming various forms—impulse, propensity, passion. If there were no such principle, we cannot see how human life could go forward. It is the spring, the motive power, of the machine. It is not implanted within us in order that it may be eradicated, but in order that it may be governed, directed, controlled. In itself it is not bad. But passions become bad when misdirected and uncontrolled by reason and conscience.

II. CHOICE ADOPTS IT. Anger, lust, or some other passion prompts to a certain course of action. The mischief is wrought when the man, in the exercise of choice, accepts as the motive of his action, and identifies himself with, a passion, the indulgence of which works evil, preferring such a principle of action to a higher and better one. The device thus adopted by the enemies of Israel was a device of selfish passion, only to be indulged at the expense of justice and good feeling.

III. SINFUL HABIT NOURISHES IT. It is not a single feeling, a single purpose, which usually accounts for a man's, a nation's, evil ways. The mischief, when isolated, might be checked. But it is too often fostered and thus encouraged, complicated, and multiplied, as the mind broods upon it. A mere fancy becomes, when encouraged, a desire; a desire, when encouraged, becomes a settled purpose.

IV. SINFUL ACTIVITY EXECUTES IT. The desire does not long remain such; it tends to its satisfaction. The device is a means to an end, and achieves itself. God's mercies are permitted, in some cases and to some extent, to "bring wicked devices to pass." For wise purposes, the Ruler of all suffers men not only to think evil thoughts, but to accomplish evil deeds.

V. GOD CAN AND OFTEN DOES FRUSTRATE IT. The oft-quoted proverb is a true one, "Man proposes, God disposes." The All-wise has his own plans, the Almighty has his own means; and the wisdom and the power of men, measured against the Divine resources, will surely be brought to nothing. "Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." There is no occasion for the people of Christ to be dismayed or overmuch distressed when evil devices enter into the minds of their adversaries. All is known to their Divine Friend and Protector, who is abundantly able to defend and to deliver his own. "He taketh the wise in

their own craftiness," their wisdom is seen to be but folly. "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength;" "The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace." The enemy may devise; but he will not be suffered to execute his devices.—T.

Vers. 14—22.—*The invader discomfited.* Although it would be presumptuous to apply the language of this prophetic passage to any particular political event in the history of Israel, there were many occasions upon which invasion was permitted and the soil of Palestine was trodden by hostile armies; many occasions upon which the invader retreated, overwhelmed with disaster and ignominy. It is therefore allowable to interpret great political incidences and occurrences in the light of the principles here propounded upon the highest authority. At the same time, it is just to observe that there is truth here which has a wider range, and that the final confusion and destruction of the enemies of the Lord and of his Church are intimated in terms which cannot be mistaken.

I. INVASION WAS PERMITTED BY THE GOD OF NATIONS. The language which Jehovah is here represented as using, "I will bring thee against my land," is very remarkable, and must be interpreted, in conformity with the common usage of Hebrew literature, as implying that all events happened by Divine permission, and may in a sense in this universe, which is under Divine control, be attributed to the Supreme. But this not in such a sense as to charge God with men's iniquity, or to relieve men of their proper responsibility.

II. THE INVADER WAS YET THE OBJECT OF DIVINE DISPLEASURE. The lust of aggrandizement and of political power was the usual motive of the invader; and a knowledge of the Divine character assures us that action prompted by such motives cannot be other than disapproved and condemned.

III. THE INTERPOSITION OF THE MIGHTIEST CONFOUNDED THE MIGHTY. The terms employed to give expression to the judicial and retributive action of the Lord of all are most emphatic and unqualified: "My fury shall come up in my nostrils; for in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken. . . . I will call for a sword against him," etc. The means by which the invader is put to flight, and the people whom he has attacked are delivered, are described: "Every man's sword shall be against his brother; and I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood," etc.

IV. GREAT AS WAS THE CONFIDENCE OF THE AGGRESSOR, GREATER STILL WAS HIS HUMILIATION. The defeat and consternation of the invader are forcibly depicted. He came in pride; he departed in dishonour and disgrace. He came in numbers; he departed a mere remnant. He came amidst the terror of all beholders; he departed amidst hatred and contempt.

V. GOD GLORIFIED HIMSELF IN THE DESTRUCTION OF HIS FOES AND IN THE DELIVERANCE OF HIS FRIENDS. God magnified and sanctified himself before many nations; and this he did by openly fulfilling his own predictions, by saving his own people, and by confounding all the selfish and rapacious plans of his enemies.

APPLICATION. The principle contained in the prediction is one which is always applicable to all God's people, and which has an especial reference to those awful crises through which, it may be, the Church of Christ has yet to pass. Mysterious as it seems to us, it is yet a fact that the Omnipotent suffers the powers of error and of sin to gather themselves together against his people. But this should not strike dismay into the breasts of Christians, however they may feel themselves powerless and defenceless. When they gaze upon the hosts of their adversaries, let them remember that "he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision."—T.

Vers. 1—13.—*The stability of God's kingdom.* The lengthened subjection of the Hebrews had sapped their courage and their hope. The promises of a return to Canaan fell upon hearts full of apathy and self-diffidence. A latent fear was growing up that, even should they regain their old possession, they would soon be exposed to fresh invasion from some grasping monarch. They felt their lack of organization, their lack of military prowess, and men devoid of energy felt that it was better to remain in exile than to be more completely crushed after a temporary restoration. Hence Ezekiel was commissioned to deal with this form of indifference before it grew into active opposition. A vision respecting a great confederacy against Israel is

granted to the prophet. God anticipates the gravest evil. He reveals to his people that this criminal conspiracy will end in complete disaster to its originators, and that Israel's triumph will be complete and perpetual. Ezekiel's face was set firmly against Gog, because God's face was against him.

I. GOD'S KINGDOM IS SECURE AGAINST THE GREATEST WORLDLY CONFEDERACY. The theory that is propounded in this prophetic picture is that possibly all peoples adverse to righteousness will combine against the righteous nation. The empires of the extreme North will, sooner or later, coalesce with the great empires of Asia and Africa in a common greed for the territory and possessions of Israel. The world-power is provoked into active opposition by the presence of a righteous and spiritual kingdom. As darkness is the foe of light, water the foe of fire, death the foe of life, so selfish wickedness is the foe of goodness. Sooner or later, these two great forces shall meet for final and mortal combat on the earth. But the mightiest forces are not those which are visible. Victory will not finally sit on the banners of largest battalions. These numbers count for nothing with God. Minor rivalries are often forgotten by reason of a mightier passion, viz. a common hatred of truth and God.

II. GOD'S KINGDOM IS SECURE AGAINST THE CLEVEREST MILITARY TACTICS. Men have enormous faith in swords and shields, in rifles, cannons, and dynamite. Against the empire of righteousness the most complete and prudent preparations will be made. No precaution foreseen by human sagacity will be omitted. Each nation will fight with such weapons as they can most skilfully wield. The most clever inventions in offensive artillery will be pressed into service. The hostility will be pressed on with all the arts and machinations possible to the human mind. Yet there is a force enlisted upon the side of the righteous kingdom that shall baffle all human combination, and make all human energy to appear as an embodiment of weakness. Man's strength and skill are only borrowed instruments.

III. GOD'S KINGDOM IS SECURE AMID UNFRIENDLY NEUTRALS. "Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish . . . shall say to thee, Art thou come to take a spoil?" These peoples were neighbours to Israel, unwilling to join openly the ranks of Israel's foes, yet secretly desiring to see Israel humbled. They were heartless enough to cheer on the aggressive leaders of the foe, moved by a selfish hope that they might avoid the toil and the peril of war, and yet gain some advantage out of Israel's defeat. Neutrality at such a time and in such a manner was a crime scarcely minor to the crime of invasion, and such neutrality will be covered with disgrace. The most hidden motive of man, Israel's Ruler will detect, and in proportion to wrong-doing will be the award. Neutrals are usually despised by both sides. Nor can we forget how deeply God felt a selfish neutrality upon a former occasion, when the voice of the angel said, "Curse ye Meroz; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants of Meroz, because they came not to the help of the Lord against the mighty!"

IV. GOD'S KINGDOM IS SECURE BECAUSE EVERY FOE IS UNDER THE RESTRAINT OF JEHOVAH. Every selfish passion of man is under the control of God. A world of meaning is in that phrase, "I will put hooks into thy jaws." At any point in the development of the hostile project, God could have defeated it. He could have bridled the malicious impulse of Gog, the originator. He could have deprived him of reason or of life. He could have smitten with blindness all the leaders of the expedition. But God sees it to be best to allow large liberty to wicked men. The inner nature of wickedness is seen when it bears its full and proper fruit. Some plants look well in the shoot and in the leaf, but the fruit thereof is deadly. Men are seldom conscious of the action of God upon them. He "girded Cyrus" with strength and courage for his work, although Cyrus knew him not. And Gog would pursue his brilliant march, proud of himself and of his forces, least of all imagining that his Royal Foe had put already a hook in his jaw, and was simply leading him on to destruction. Utterly insane is the man who dares fight against God. The issue may be early foreseen.—D.

Vers. 14—23.—*Human malice a contribution to God's glory.* God has a variety of methods for dealing with rebellious men. Sometimes he allows them to have their wilful way up to the margin of success, when suddenly the tables are turned, and apparent success becomes conspicuous defeat. With vain confidence they press on their daring measures, and are led, as it were, into an ambush and completely destroyed.

Thus God dealt with Pharaoh at the Red Sea, and thus he purposes to deal with the unscrupulous monarch of the north. Their disastrous fortunes should leave on all surviving minds the vital lesson that Jehovah is the Supreme King, and that he is worthy of universal homage.

I. WICKED MEN ARE THE DUPES OF SLENDEREST TEMPTATION. This ideal monarch —type of worldly kings—was seduced into battle by the appearance of Israel's conscious security. Here was a nation without an army, without fortresses, without military generals; a nation having no visible means of protection. To evil men this was an irresistible bait. Now men with better dispositions would have argued, "Here is a peaceful nation, bent on the innocent arts of industry, devoid of ambitious aims. They deserve our respect, and (if needful) our protection." But impiety is as injurious to society as it is offensive to God. The slenderest hope of plunder and of territorial aggrandizement incites them to sharpen their weapons for human destruction. To get an empty bubble of fame, or gain rule over a few square miles, ten thousand precious lives will be sacrificed. Worse still, God's favour will be forfeited. In this respect man has sunk to a lower level than the beasts of the forest.

II. SEEMING SUCCESS OFTEN A SNARE TO COMPLETE OVERTHROW. "Thou shalt come up against my people Israel, as a cloud to cover the land." It seemed as if success were certain. What other result was possible? Their multitudinous horde seemed omnipotent by reason of its very numbers. They could compass every town and village so as to prevent a single escape. This over-confidence was weakness; it seemed to underrate the opposing force; it served to relax discipline; it blinded them to the fact that invisible forces might be silently at work against them. Thus it happened to the first Napoleon. His brilliant successes flushed him with vain confidence, led him on to destruction. "Cursed is the man who trusteth in man;" "He that trusteth his own heart is a fool."

III. HOSTILE INVASION AGAINST ISRAEL IS CLEARLY FORESEEN BY GOD. The knowledge of an enemy's designs and tactics is half-way towards defeating him. Many military commanders succeed by the secrecy of their projects. If one knows where and when the foe will strike, one can be well prepared. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. In this respect, the servants of God enjoy a great advantage. No design nor project of our foes can escape the eye of our God. The first formation of the evil thought is clearly detected by him, and he keeps us well informed of our adversaries' schemes. In the case of Gog, the prophets of Jehovah had repeatedly foretold the formidable invasion; and, although Israel seemed unprepared for the assault, Israel's Defender was well equipped for the occasion. The issue was secured for Israel's glory.

IV. GOD'S ENEMIES ARE OFTEN DEFEATED BY INTERNECINE STRIFE. A confederacy cemented by wickedness is never durable. It will not bear any strain of trial. Men who fight for spoil soon discover that *their* interests and their leaders' interests are distinct and separate things. Sin has no principle of cohesion. In many cases an army has defeated itself by internal discord. Each man's sword has been turned upon his comrade. So God here announces that he will dissolve their base alliance. "Every man's sword shall be against his brother."

V. GOD'S ARMY IS COMPOSED OF UNEXPECTED FORCES. In ancient times God has employed winds, storms, hail, fire, to defeat the enemies of Israel. The sea was God's triumphant army against Pharaoh. He sent the hornet to drive out the Canaanite. Locusts have been once and again employed as his invading regiment. Flakes of snow have done his destructive work. Pestilence has often served as his light brigade. Hailstones have been his irresistible artillery. He has turned back an army by the spectre of its own superstitious fears. Fire overthrew the cities of the plain. The eruption of Vesuvius did a deadly work. Every force in nature is a servant of the living God, and in a moment can be made a soldier, armed to the teeth. Men are slowly discovering that God's forces stored in nature are mightier than the brawn of the human arm, and are depending more upon dynamite and gun-cotton than upon human strength and courage. So says God, "I will rain upon him, and upon his bands . . . an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone."

VI. THE TRIUMPH IS WITH GOD. Mere overthrow of the enemy is not the triumph that satisfies God. His aim is to bring light and conviction to men's minds—to renew and elevate men's best nature. "I will plead against him." By means of this defensive

contest God will address himself to the minds and hearts of the people. "I will magnify myself." Impossible! God cannot magnify himself. He cannot be greater than he is. But he will make his greatness known. By such mighty deeds he will reveal to men his invisible power, his matchless skill, his various excellences, his ineffable goodness. Men shall discover more of his compassion, his patience, his fatherly desire for men's good; and, instead of hating him, they shall admire and honour him. To a large extent men fight against God because they do not know him. They misconceive his government and his dispositions. Real knowledge of God is the road to life and bliss. As the outcome of the final struggle, even the "heathen shall know" and serve the righteous King. "I will sanctify myself."—D.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The supreme contest.* What is the real significance of this prophecy? Is it to receive a literal or a symbolical interpretation? If not fairly open to the one, in what direction shall we look for the other? Agreeing with the views advocated by Fairbairn, we give his exposition, reproducing his arguments as given in his work on this prophet. And thus guided, we look at—

I. THE REASONS FOR REJECTING A LITERAL INTERPRETATION. 1. The name given to the hostile leader points to an "ideal delineation;" while the name of the country is that of a "very indefinite territory," impossible to define. 2. The extraordinary character of the combination of forces, including those most remote and dissociated from one another, is "the reverse of the natural one," and points to "the clothing of an idea rather than to a literal reality." 3. The immensity of the numbers of the allied host makes it impossible that they would actually come up against Israel for plunder; they must necessarily lose rather than gain, even if they succeeded to the full extent of their expectations. 4. The details respecting the wood of the enemy's weapons (ch. xxxix. 9, 10) and the burial of the dead (ch. xxxix. 11, 12) are not such as would become historical. 5. The particulars, especially as to the exact locality, do not correspond with those given in other prophecies (see Isa. xxxiv.; Joel iii.; Zech. xiv.). 6. The undoubted Messianic element in the prophecy demands a non-literal interpretation; for the kingdom of Christ was not to be established or secured by carnal, but by spiritual means.

II. THE TRUE SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATION. The prophet has already, in previous visions, brought us on to a period when Israel (the Church of Christ) has entered on a time of rest and triumph. The second David, the Divine Shepherd of Israel, presides over his people who dwell in security. But that is not the end; much has still to be done and to be experienced. For: 1. The peace and the prospects of the Christian Church stir up the enmity of the world, and "enlarge the field of conflict;" and "as 'the whole earth is Christ's' heritage," there must be conflict until the victory is complete. 2. The war is to be on a gigantic scale, for the question now is "whether God's truth or man's sin is to have possession of the field;" in comparison with this great final conflict all previous contests seem small, and the largest numbers are applicable. 3. Great and preponderating as are the odds against the Church, reckoned by material resources, the presence of Divine power and grace on the side of Israel makes her completely victorious, and issues in the defeat of the adversary. 4. The kingdom over all the earth becomes the Lord's. It becomes clear that it was his zeal on behalf of righteousness which led to previous chastisements, and that same zeal now causes them to triumph. Before the Church there stretches a "prospect of eternal peace and blessedness." The delineation may, or it may not, have to do with some particular crisis or decisive moment when the "spiritual controversy rises to a gigantic magnitude, and ranges on either side all that is good and all that is evil in the world."

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS. 1. We need not be discouraged because a great and threatening battle has still to be fought out. We have intimations in Scripture that the Church will be called to face overwhelming hosts. 2. We may, by doing our best in the sphere in which we are placed, contribute something to the final triumph of the good. 3. We ought to have some better assurance than the presence of vast and apparently invincible numbers that we are on the winning side. The one decisive question is this—Is God with us or against us?—C.

Ver. 4.—*Sent back by God.* "I will turn thee back." "There is a way which

seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. xiv. 12). There are paths that attract us, that we enter upon with keen expectancy, that we pursue with pleasure, but that, in time, we find to be wrong; then is it best to turn back, and to "return on our way" *at once.*

I. MISTAKEN PATHS. Such as those of: 1. *Extravagance.* A larger expenditure of our means than we can properly afford, pointing toward and leading to financial embarrassment and grave difficulty and distress. 2. *Unregulated activity.* Such mental or physical work as, either in measure or in method, draws too largely on our resources, and ends in nervous disorder or some serious illness. 3. *Self-indulgence;* either in unwholesome literature or in the grosser gratifications of the flesh. 4. *A sceptical habit.* The disposition, which in time becomes a habit, to regard everything with a cynical and distrustful eye, and would rather accept the uncharitable view than the generous one. 5. *Worldliness.* The way in which the multitudes are walking; the endeavour to find satisfaction and rest in the interests and engagements, in the treasures and the pleasures, of time and sense.

II. A CONVICTION WHICH COMES FROM GOD. The conviction that the way that has been chosen is the wrong one. This assurance may come through one of many channels; it may be the utterance of one of many voices; it may be the solemn warning of some providential occurrence; or it may be the faithful rebuke of a true and fearless friend; or it may be a deep and bitter sense of insufficiency, of failure, of heart-ache, of perversion of power and misuse of opportunity, a sense of wrong and sin; or it may be the direct enlightenment and appeal of the Spirit of God. But the conviction is written on the tablet of the soul that the way is wrong; a voice is heard in the inner chambers of the spirit. "Turn back, return on thy way, pursue a different course, start in an opposite direction, seek another and a better goal."

III. THE WISDOM OF RETURNING. 1. *We can afford to return.* It may cost us something; there may be some companions to forsake, but these are best at a distance; there may be some tender regrets, but these are temporary and will soon be left behind; there may be some humiliation to endure, but this is not of an unmanly kind, but, on the contrary, honourable and commendable; there may be some sacrifice of enjoyment or of treasure, but this can very well be borne with a moderate measure of fortitude,—we shall very soon reconcile ourselves to that. But: 2. *We cannot afford to go on.* If we do, we must prepare for the very worst that we can suffer; the wrong road leads not only to embarrassment, but also to saddest loss, to bitter disappointment, to helplessness, to ruin, to death. Moreover, God has met us with a Divine encouragement. He has taught us that: 3. *There is a way upward,* which we can all take. One has come to us to say, "I am the Way." Intimate association, living union, with him is the way of wisdom, the way of righteousness, the way of life.—C.

Ver. 11.—*Spiritual security.* We may treat this subject in two ways. We may have regard to—

I. NATIONAL SECURITY. Unfortunately, it is only too typical of our race that a great power should say, "I will go up to the land of unwalled villages," etc. Taking men and nations as they are, we have to reckon upon: 1. *National unscrupulousness.* It has been enough that one country has been strong and another weak, one covetous and another wealthy, one well armed and another defenceless, for the military enterprise to be undertaken, the attack to be delivered, and the disaster to be sustained. Then there has to be: 2. *Some means and method of national defence.* And we may find a country: (1) Pitiably helpless. Such is the case with Israel (in the text); it has not yet recovered from its past defeats and despoilments; it has not had the opportunity of strengthening itself against attack. (2) Culpably negligent. It may be so intent on enrichment or enjoyment that it has not given the needful time and strength to make itself secure against assault from without. (3) Secured by international covenant; as Switzerland. (4) Wisely regardful of its chief source of safety. This is found, not in regiments and in ships, not in fortresses and in magazines—though these may not be disregarded—but in the manliness and temperance of its citizens, and in the favour of Almighty God.

II. INDIVIDUAL SECURITY. Every man has to guard the sanctity of his own heart and character, the honour of his own name; his most sacred and bounden duty is to

see that it is not invaded and defiled. That it may be preserved in its purity and integrity it becomes him: 1. *To recognize the strength of the enemy.* To remember and to realize that the adversaries of his soul are many, subtle, and strong; they are such as these—covetousness, passion, pride, intemperance, worldliness, unbelief. 2. *To raise the strongest defences* he can secure. And these are (1) *good principles*,—the love of that which is true and pure and sound, the hatred of that which is base and shameful and degrading; (2) *good habits*,—the habits, well cultivated and constantly sustained, of self-command, of temperance, of purity, of thorough investigation before acceptance and utterance, of devotion. There are "the walls, the bars, and the gates" of the soul, which the adversary must take before he succeeds in his attack, within which the soul should be safely entrenched. 3. *To secure the guardianship of God.* By simplicity and uprightness of heart, by prayerfulness of attitude and engagement, to secure that gracious and mighty power against which all the devices and all the assaults of evil will not be able to succeed.—C.

Ver. 23.—*Making God great and holy.* "I magnify myself, and sanctify myself."

I. GOD MAKING HIMSELF GREAT AND HOLY IN THE SIGHT OF MEN. We may ask: 1. *Why God magnifies himself;* and the answer will be—Not for the mere purpose of self-glorification. We cannot think that of him "whose nature and whose name is Love" (see homily on ch. xxxvi. 16—21). We conclude that he desires and determines to make his Name to be had in reverence, and to cause himself to be honoured as the Great and Holy One, because (1) it is inherently *right* that it should be so; and because (2) it is altogether and immeasurably advantageous and elevating to his children that it should be so; it is indeed the *only* way by which they can attain a true and worthy manhood; for it is reverence toward God which is the very root of human excellence and nobility. 2. *How he magnifies himself.* This is by (1) all that he has said of himself in his Word; (2) all that he makes known of his disposition and his character by his Divine providence; (3) by the revelation of himself in the Person of his Son. In these three ways especially God makes us know how *great* he is,—how great is his majesty, his power, his goodness, his righteousness; and how *holy* he is,—how utterly he hates sin, how determined he is to rebuke it, and not only to rebuke it, but to conquer and to expel it. Most especially does he "magnify and sanctify himself" in Jesus Christ; for in his Person and in his work we see the greatness of his love, and the intensity of his hatred of sin and the fixedness of his purpose to subdue and to extirpate it.

II. OUR DUTY TO MAGNIFY HIM. 1. *Why* we should do so. Because: (1) It is the one right thing for us to do. The Great One should be exalted; the Holy One should be honoured, because he *is* great and holy, especially because his greatness is the greatness of goodness as well as of power, and because his holiness is crowned with patience and mercy. (2) To revere God and magnify him in our heart is the one way to our own moral and spiritual elevation, to nobility of character, to excellency of life. (3) It is distinctly *the* way to promote the happiness and well-being of the world. 2. *How* we can do so. (1) *In our spirit;* by cherishing in our hearts the reverence that is "due to his Name;" *i.e.* due to himself for all that he is and has done for us. (2) *In our life.* (See Phil. i. 20.) By bringing all our actions into harmony with the known will of God; by living in such a way that we show ourselves to be loyal subjects of Jesus Christ, consulting his mind and obedient to his Word in everything; by making it clear that we are willing to put forth any effort or submit to any sacrifice in order that Christ may be great in the esteem and in the affections of men; thus we "magnify and sanctify" him. (3) *By our speech.* We need not be always introducing the distinctive language of religion into our conversation; yet we may take opportunity in the home, as well as at the desk or in the pulpit, to commend Jesus Christ to the hearts of young and old, as that Divine Saviour in whom to trust, as that Divine Lord in whose service they will find freedom, rest, and eternal life.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Of the two main divisions of this chapter, the first (vers. 1—20) depicts the greatness of the overthrow of Gog; the second (vers. 21—29) records the impression made by it upon both Israel and the heathen, and adds a closing promise to the former.

Vers. 1—20.—In the first main division Ezekiel repeats the substance of what has already been advanced concerning the defeat of Gog (vers. 1—8), after which he strives to represent its completeness (vers. 9—20), by setting forth (1) the immense quantity of spoil Israel should obtain from the fallen foe (vers. 9, 10), (2) the length of time it should take Israel to bury the dead and cleanse the land from defilement (vers. 11—16, and (3) the horrible carnage which should ensue on Gog's destruction, symbolized by a vast sacrificial feast prepared by Jehovah for the beasts and birds (vers. 17—20).

Ver. 1.—**The chief prince of Meshech and Tubal**; or, *prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal* (see on ch. xxxviii. 2).

Ver. 2.—**I will . . . leave but the sixth part of thee.** The word שִׁשִּׁתִּיךָ is derived either from the numeral six, שֵׁשׁ, or from the root שׁשׁשׁ, the import of which is uncertain, although a cognate root in Ethiopic suggests the idea of "going on" or "proceeding"—a meaning Hävernick also finds in the Hebrew. The former derivation has been followed by the Authorized Version, which renders in the margin, "I will strike thee with six plagues," or "draw thee back with a hook of six teeth," and by Hengstenberg, with whom Plumptre agrees, "I will six thee," *i.e.* "afflict thee with six plagues," viz. those mentioned in ch. xxxviii. 22. The latter derivation, presumably the more correct, is adopted by the LXX. (καθοδηγήσω), the Vulgate (*educam*), the Revised Version ("I will lead thee on"), and by modern expositors generally. Hitzig and Smend approve of Ewald's translation, "I entice thee astray, and lead thee with leading-strings."

Ver. 3.—**I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand.** Bows and arrows were characteristic weapons of the Scythians, whom Herodotus (iv. 46) styles ἱπποτοξόται (comp. Jer. v. 16; vi. 23; and see note on ch. xxxviii. 15).

Vers. 4—6.—**I will give thee unto ravenous birds of every sort**; or, *wing*. The language depicts an army on the march, followed by jackals, vultures, and other birds of prey, ready to feast upon the corpses of slaughtered men (comp. ch. xxxiii. 27; 1 Sam. xvii. 46; and Homer's 'Iliad,' i. 4, 5). In addition to destroying Gog, causing him to **fall upon the mountains of Israel and upon the open field**; literally, *upon the face of the field*, Jehovah engages to carry the fire of war and generally of devastation (cf. ch. xxxviii. 22; Amos ii. 2, 5; Rev. xx. 29) into Gog's own land, **Magog** (see on ch. xxxviii. 2), **and among them that dwell carelessly** (better, *securely*) **in the isles**; or, *coast-lands* (ch. xxvii. 7); *i.e.* not merely the merchants of Tarshish, or the "isles" of the trading nations mentioned in ch. xxxviii. 13, as Hengstenberg and Plumptre prefer, but, as Smend, Schröder, and Keil explain, all the distant peoples of the coast-lands from whom Gog's armies were drawn (ch. xxxviii. 5, 6), and in whom were many of Gog's sympathizers.

Ver. 8.—**Behold! it is come.** "The words which a man might speak on beholding his purpose accomplished are, with Ezekiel's bold anthropomorphism, put into the mouth of Jehovah" (Plumptre).

Vers. 9, 10 set forth as the first proof of the greatness of Gog's overthrow the immense booty in the shape of weapons of war which should be obtained by the inhabitants of the cities of Israel. So huge should be the quantity of weapons left behind by the slain, that the Israelites should **burn them with fire seven years.** This burning of the weapons has been explained by Hävernick, on the ground that weapons of war, as incompatible with Messianic times, should be no more required (cf. Isa. ii. 4); by Ewald, as in accordance with the custom of the Hebrews (Isa. ix. 5) and other ancient peoples (Livy, xxxviii. 23; Virgil, 'Æneid,' viii. 562); by Hitzig and Smend, as prompted by the consideration that Israel, for whom Jehovah had fought, should have no further need of weapons; by Schröder, as indicating that for Israel these warlike instruments should then so completely lose their power to terrify that they might be looked upon simply as so much firewood; and by Keil, as designed to annihilate the enemy and remove every trace of him. Kliefoth appears nearest the mark, in suggesting that the emphasis lies upon the length of time the burning should continue; and that this was intended, by conveying an idea of the vastness of the spoil, to represent the thoroughness

of Gog's destruction and of Israel's deliverance. That the whole delineation is symbolical appears from the number of years the weapons are said to serve for fuel, viz. seven, and from the character of the weapons themselves, which, if not entirely wooden, were at least all combustible. Of the "armour" generally (נֶשֶׁק, "something joined," from a root signifying "to join") the pieces mentioned—the shields and the bucklers (see ch. xxxviii. 4), the bows and arrows (see ver. 3), the handstaves, or, *javelins* (margin), perhaps, as Hitzig and Smend suggest, the staff with which a horseman strikes his beast (see Numb. xxii. 27), and the spears—were mostly composed of timber. When all should have been given to the flames, it would then appear that on their late owners the *lex talionis* had worked out its literal avengement, that they who had intended to despoil Israel were themselves spoiled; and they who hoped to plunder Israel were themselves plundered (comp. Isa. xvii. 14).

Vers. 11—16 contain a second proof of the completeness of Gog's destruction, viz. the length of time occupied in burying the slain and cleansing the land.

Ver. 11.—Gog, who should invade Israel in the hope of acquiring the entire mastery of her land, would obtain at Jehovah's hands only a place there of graves, *i.e.* either, as Hitzig, Ewald, Keil, and Smend suggest, a place where a grave might be possible—a place large enough to receive his slaughtered carcases; or as Hävernick proposes, "an altogether special grave as no other in Israel;" or as Schröder interprets, "a place where there is a grave for him and nothing else." Concerning both the designation and the site of this divinely provided sepulchre controversy has arisen. (1) *As to its site.* The notion of Michaelis and Eichhorn, that the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea was in some way related to the mountains of Abarim mentioned in Numb. xxvii. 12 and Deut. xxxii. 49, and that of Hitzig, that it signified "the valley of the opposite heights," as in 1 Sam. xvii. 3, and was to be sought for in the "very great valley" of Zech. xiv. 4, may at once be dismissed—the former as untenable, and the latter as far-fetched. The suggestion of Hengstenberg and Kliefoth, that by the burial-place of Gog was meant the valley of Megiddo, where Josiah fell in battle against Pharaoh-Necho (2 Kings xxiii. 29), derives support from these considerations, that the very name of Megiddo points to battles, that in its vicinity are found such passes as are here described, and that its modern designation *Lejun* (*Legio*), in all probability contains a reminiscence of the present passage. It is, however, open to the obvious objections that the place of Gog's burial was not contiguous to the field of his overthrow, and that the clause locating it "on the east of the sea," by which on this hypothesis must be understood the Mediterranean, is rather descriptive of the entire land than of any particular spot therein. Hence the view of Hävernick, Ewald, Keil, and Smend, which finds the valley in the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea, is to be preferred, though, even with agreement as to this, interpreters are not unanimous as to the spot intended. Ewald thinks of "the horrible, unwholesome valley over against the sea, *i.e.* (comp. ch. xlvii. 8) the Dead Sea, that valley which covers the ancient overbearing ones (*die Zerreisenden*), the Sodomites, who resemble these;" Keil, translating *kidmath* as "in front of," holds by "the valley of the Jordan above the Dead Sea;" Hävernick and Smend advocate "a place outside the Holy Land," though the clause, "a grave in Israel," seems against this. Dr. Currey, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' hints, not without reason, that the valley was "imaginary." (2) *As to its designation.* That in the word "passengers" lies a paronomasia is apparent; but whether threefold or only twofold is uncertain. In the present verse הָעֹבְרִים may signify either (1) such travellers as were wont to pass through the valley (Keil), which is the obvious and natural interpretation; or (2) the warriors of Gog (Ewald, Hitzig), who intended to pass through the land, but whose invasion had only proved a passing storm; or (3) the commissioners who should be appointed to pass through the land in search of bones (ver. 15). The notion of Ewald, who derives עֹבְרִים from עֲבָרָה, and translates "haughty," "overbearing," meaning the Gôgites, is countenanced by no other expositor. If the first sense be taken, then the verse will read, "The valley of the passers through, and it (the valley, in consequence of having become the grave of Gog) stops (the way of) the passers through;" *i.e.* it becomes thereafter impassable for travellers (Rosenmüller, Keil); or, it stops the noses, or breath, of such travellers by reason of its horrible stench (Ewald, Hävernick). If the second meaning be selected, the valley must be understood to have afterwards received its name from the fact that Gog's warriors lay entombed beneath its sod, and "the stopping of the passengers" to signify that whereas Gog purposed to overrun the land, his destructive career was there ignominiously arrested (Schröder). If the third rendering be preferred, then the valley will be held to have

derived its designation, after the event, from the passing through it or through the land of the searchers, in which case the stopping of the passengers can only have alluded to the fact that, as the "buriers" proceeded with the work of interment, they were compelled to turn away their faces and stop their noses because of the noisome effluvium which arose from the corpses. The first interpretation is the best, though the first and second might be combined by making the first "passengers" stand for the travellers and the second for the invaders, whose career should there be stopped; and to this view a certain countenance is lent by the statements which follow, that there should Gog and all his multitude—literally, *all his noisy tumult*—be buried, and that the valley ever afterwards should bear the name of Hamon-gog, or, *Gog's multitude*.

Vers. 12, 13.—The time that should be occupied in Gog's funeral should be seven months—so great should be the number of the dead—the sacred number seven recalling the seven years consumed in the burning of the weapons (ver. 9), and reminding one of the "seven times heated" furnace into which the Hebrew children were cast, and of the "seven times" of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation (Dan. iii. 19; iv. 23). The parties who should conduct his obsequies should be the house of Israel, even all the people of the land, indicating the common joy occasioned by the barbaric chieftain's overthrow. The motive which should impel them in their work would be a desire to cleanse the land from the defilement it had contracted from the corpses of the slain (comp. Numb. xix. 11, 22; xxxi. 19; xxxv. 33); and the end should be that the work should be to them, not for "a remembrance" (Ewald), but a renown, not because they should have helped to bury Gog (Hengstenberg), or through burying Gog should have proved themselves his conquerors (Smend), and in virtue of Jehovah's protection the possessors of his grave (Hitzig), but because in the day when Jehovah glorified himself through Gog's destruction, he (Jehovah) should also be glorified by their (Israel's) zeal "to show themselves a holy people by sweeping all uncleanness away" (Keil).

Ver. 14.—When the work of burying Gog should have gone on for seven months, at the end of that time the Israelites should sever out (comp. Deut. x. 8) men of continual employment; literally, *men of continuance*; i.e. persons hired for a continuous work or devoted to a constant occupation, whose business it should be passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain—or, as the Revised Version reads, *to bury them that pass through, that remain*—upon the face of the land. Here, again, the old play upon the word "passengers" recurs, and with it two or three difficulties. (1) It is not clear whether the commissioners consisted of two classes of officers, "passers through," or "searchers," who scoured the land in search of unburied skeletons or bones, which, however, they did not bury; and "buriers" proper, who, accompanying these searchers, conducted the interment of such skeletons or bones as were found (Hengstenberg, Keil); or whether the commissioners were only one body, who both searched and buried (Ewald and Smend). (2) It is doubtful whether the אֶת in אֶת־הָעֹבְרִים should be taken as the sign of the accusative, and the clause translated as in the Revised Version, in which case the "passengers" that should be buried could only be the "invaders" as above (see ver. 11); or as a preposition, in which case the rendering of the Authorized Version must stand, and the "passengers" be regarded as the "searchers." (3) It is open to debate whether ver. 14 should not close with the initial words of ver. 15, as Ewald proposes, "And the passengers shall search and pass through in the land;" or at least whether the first clause in ver. 15 should not form an independent sentence, thus: "And they that pass through in the land shall pass through," as in the Revised Version, in which case the sighting of unburied bones (ver. 15) would not necessarily be the work of "searchers," but of any one, the verb וְרָאָה being impersonal. It is impossible to decide dogmatically in a question of so much difficulty; but the Revised Version appears to present the most exact rendering of the Hebrew, and upon the whole the most intelligible account of what was intended to take place, viz. the appointment of a special body of commissioners, who should be designated both "passengers," in ironical allusion to Gog who had meant to pass through the land, and "buriers," from the nature of the task delegated to them, viz. the interment of the "passengers," *i.e.* the Gôgites, and who should begin their work after the main body of the slain had been removed, *i.e.* at the end of the seven months of burying.

Ver. 15 describes the method of procedure these "searchers" and "buriers," should follow. If these were distinct from each other, the "searchers"—if they were the same, any others—on discovering a man's bone should set up a sign by it; literally, *build near it a pillar*; erect a heap of stone (comp. 2 Kings xxiii. 17; Jer. xxxi. 21) to call the attention of the buriers, who, on coming to the spot, should inter it in the valley of Hamon-gog.

Ver. 16.—As another mark to distinguish Gog's tomb, a city should arise in its vicinity, bearing the name Hamonah, or "Multitude" (comp. Isa. xix. 18, "the city of destruction"), though Schmieder thinks it must have been "a city of graves," since a city of houses could not exist in such a valley of the dead, and indeed the LXX. gives as the city's name Πολυάνδριον, by which later Greek writers were accustomed to call the common ground in a cemetery as distinguished from its paternal sepulchres. If quite improbable that Bethshan or Scythopolis near Megiddo was Ezekiel's Hamonah, it is possible the actual city may have been named after the ideal. Plumptre cites as a modern parallel the English town of Lichfield (or "Field of corpses"), which, according to tradition, commemorates the destruction of the Danes. When the work of the buriers should be finished, the land would be completely cleansed.

Vers. 17—20 exhibit in a third way the severity of Gog's overthrow by setting forth the bloody carnage which should attend it.

Ver. 17.—Expanding the thought of ver. 4, and borrowing the imagery of the older prophets, Isaiah (xxxiv. 6; lvi. 9) and Jeremiah (xlvi. 10; l. 29; li. 40), Ezekiel represents Gog's destruction as a great sacrifice—literally, *slaying;* hence a sacrificial feast or simply banquet (as in Gen. xxxi. 54)—upon the mountains of Israel, prepared by Jehovah for the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, which he, therefore, invites to come from all quarters to eat flesh and drink blood.

Ver. 18 specifies the victims whose flesh and blood should form their banquet, viz. the mighty, as in ch. xxxii. 12, 27, and the princes of the earth, meaning the nobles and other dignitaries in Gog's army, who, in accordance with the symbol of a feast, are spoken of as "rams," "lambs," "goats," "bullocks," and "fatlings of Bashan" (comp. Ps. xxii. 12). "*Per hæc animantium, quæ in sacrificiis usurpari solebant, nomina varii hominum ordines intelliguntur, principum, ducum, militum, quod et Chaldæus observat*" (Grotius. Comp. Rev. xix. 17, 18). In Zeph. i. 7 the heathen are the guests, and his people the victims, at Jehovah's banquet.

Vers. 21—29 record the impression Gog's overthrow should make upon both Israel and the heathen.

Ver. 22.—**The house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day forward.** What should convince them of this would be their triumph and deliverance through Gog's annihilation.

Vers. 23, 24. — **And the heathen shall know.** The special lesson for them should be not so much teaching concerning God's supremacy over them, or concerning their relation to Israel, as concerning the principles of God's dealings with Israel. They should learn that if Israel had for a season been abandoned to the sword and driven into exile, it was not because of Jehovah's inability to protect them, but because of their wickedness which had caused him to hide his face from them — an expression which in Ezekiel occurs only here and in ver. 29, though it is found in the Pentateuch (Deut. xxxi. 17, 18) and in the older prophets (Isa. viii. 17; liv. 8; lvii. 17; lxiv. 7; Jer. xxxiii. 5).

Vers. 25—29.—This section Hengstenberg regards as "the close of the whole system of prophecies of a predominantly comforting character from ch. xxxiii. 21 onwards;" Keil views it as the proper conclusion to the prophecy concerning Gog and the series of predictions from ch. xxxv. 1 onwards. It is in substance a recapitulation of God's gracious promise to bring again the captivity of Israel, of which the prophet had just been reminded in ver. 23, and to which accordingly he now in thought goes back. It traces the whole course of the Divine dealings with the nation from the point of the exile onwards.

Ver. 25.—**I will bring again the captivity of Jacob.** (For the use of "Jacob" as a designation of the people, see ch. xxviii. 25; xxxvii. 25.) The promise goes back to Deut. xxx. 3; Jer. xxix. 14; xxx. 3; xxxi. 23; xxxii. 44; and other passages. That its fulfilment began with the return from Babylon is not inconsistent with the view that its fulfilment will terminate with the final ingathering of Israel out of the nations by her conversion to Christianity, and her consequent admission to the Church. That its first cause will be "mercy" to the whole house of Israel will not prevent that cause from being at the same time a jealous regard for the Divine holiness (comp. ch. xxxvi. 21, 22).

Ver. 26.—**After they have borne their shame** (comp. ch. xvi. 52, 54; xxxii. 24, 30; xxxiv. 29; xxxvi. 6). The captivity of Israel would not be brought back until her people had been thoroughly chastised for their iniquities, and that chastisement had wrought in them a spirit of penitence and a disposition towards obedience. Then should Jehovah interpose for their deliverance by gathering them out of their enemies' lands and leading them back to their own land; and these two experiences, the Cap-

tivity and the Restoration, the driving out and the bringing in, should complete their conversion to Jehovah, and secure their perpetual enjoyment of Jehovah's favour.

Ver. 29.—**I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel.** Already Jehovah had promised to put his Spirit in his people (ch. xxxvi. 27; xxxvii. 14); now the fact that he has implemented that promise by a copious effusion of the same he cites as a proof that Israel shall no more forfeit his favour because no more shall she forsake his ways (comp. Isa. lix. 21). The same promise had been previously given by Joel (ii. 28), and was afterwards renewed by Zechariah (xii. 10). The citation of Joel's words by Peter on the Day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 17) shows that he regarded the remarkable effusion of the Holy Ghost on that memorable occasion as a fulfilment of the promise here recorded by Ezekiel. Yet the promise was not then exhausted. Rather it has often since been implemented, and will doubtless receive its consummation in the new Jerusalem. "No historical Church, Jewish or Gentile," writes Plumptre, "has ever yet realized the picture here sketched by Ezekiel. We ask, as before—Will it ever be realized on earth? or must we look for it only in the heavenly city whose Builder and Maker is God?"

NOTE.—In addition to what has been stated at the beginning of this prophecy (ch. xxxviii. 1) with reference to the general significance of this invasion by and overthrow of Gog, that it points to some tremendous conflict in the latter days between the powers of the world and the Church of Christ, a few words may be offered in support of the proposition that nevertheless there is no reason to expect that this conflict will take the form of an actual invasion of the land of Israel or of a real fire-and-sword battle with the Church, or that Gog will step upon the field as a veritable flesh-and-blood personality, and his armies find a grave in the manner sketched by the prophet. That the whole delineation is symbolic, and embodies spiritual truths under material emblems, will hardly be doubted by one who impartially weighs the following considerations, which have been admirably brought together by Fairbairn.

1. The designation given to the great assailant of the latter times — Gog, which discovers itself to be an ideal name, if by nothing else by the manner in which it has been formed.

2. The composition of his army, which is drawn from the four quarters of the globe, in fact, from the extremities of the earth, and consists of peoples not only remote from one another, but "the most unlike naturally to act in concert for any particular purpose."

3. The object of his attack—the land of Israel, a territory so small that it is inconceivable a host so great should have been required to capture it, and so poor that had the invaders got all it contained it "could not have served to maintain them for a single day."

4. The fruits of Israel's victory—firewood for seven years out of the enemies' weapons, and seven months of labour in burying their corpses. "It would be but a very moderate allowance, on the literal supposition, to say that a million of men would thus be engaged, and that on an average each would consign two corpses to the tomb in one day; which for the hundred and eighty working days of the seven months would make an aggregate of three hundred and sixty millions of corpses! Then the putrefaction, the pestilential vapours arising from such masses of slain victims, before they were all buried! Who could live at such a time?"

5. The impossibility of harmonizing prophecy on the hypothesis that Ezekiel's picture must receive a literal interpretation, since Isaiah (xxxiv.), Joel (iii. 12, 14), and Zechariah (xiv.), who all appear to depict the same conflict as Ezekiel portrays, each pitches its scene in a different locality.

6. The gross carnality of the whole picture on the assumption that it must be literally interpreted, which is wholly inconsistent with that spirituality one associates with the Messianic times.

"Persons," writes Fairbairn, "who in the face of all these considerations can still cling to the literal view of this prophecy, must be left to themselves; they are incapable of being convinced in the way of argument."

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 8.—*God's purpose accomplished.* The prophet does not dream dreams of idle fancy, build castles in the air, or terrify men with nightmares of unreal judgments. The Word of God comes true. The predicted day arrives, the promised action is performed—"It is come, and it is done."

I. IN CREATION. God spake, and it was done. He said, "Let there be light; and light was." The creative word was with power. Men plan great things, but they are quite incompetent to carry the best of them out. The greater the artist is the more he must feel that his execution falls lamentably short of his design. It is not so with God. When he carries out his idea in his work it can be said of each stage of creation, "And God saw that it was good." He is mighty to perform all his will.

II. IN REDEMPTION. This new creation was a harder work than the first creation. No human agent could accomplish it, and God's own arm brought salvation. But though it involved the sacrifice of his Son, he carried out his great design of redeeming the lost world. The dying Jesus exclaimed, "It is finished!" The application of this redemption is not yet complete. The promise concerning this is, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa. liii. 11). But St. Peter looked forward to the grand restitution of all things, when all shall be brought in subjection to Christ (Acts iii. 21). We know that he who has begun a good work in us is able to finish it (Phil. i. 6).

III. IN JUDGMENT. If God accomplishes his designs in creation and redemption, it cannot be supposed that he will fail to carry them out in regard to judgment. Delay is no proof of failure, for the long-promised Messiah was slow to appear, yet in due time Christ was born. The mercy of God is no sign of the failure of judgment, for God was as merciful when he threatened wrath as he will be when the time comes for executing the threat. The day of judgment, that dreadful "day of the Lord," as the prophets called it, came to the nations and to Israel with fearful calamities. Assuredly it will come, and its work will be done also among all sinners.

IV. IN PROVIDENCE. God made great promises to Abraham, and the patriarch did not live to reap their accomplishment. Yet God was true to his word. All the might of Egypt could not frustrate God's gracious designs. He has great purposes for his people now. Satan may oppose the execution of them; sin, unbelief, and worldliness may rise up against them. Yet God will not desert his own inheritance. Indeed, he does now accomplish his gracious providential designs in spite of all opposition.

V. IN OBEDIENCE. There is one region in which the purpose of God is more slow to realize itself. That is the region of human will. There man is free to resist its demands for obedience. God's kingdom has not yet fully come, his will is not yet done on earth as it is in heaven. But we pray for this glorious consummation. It is our duty to labour to help it on. If God's design is accomplished in every other respect, it is monstrous for man's stubborn will to hold out against it. The spirit of the life of Christ—"Lo, I come to do thy will, O God"—is the spirit which should animate his people.

Ver. 21.—*God's glory among the heathen.* I. GOD IS CONCERNED FOR HIS GLORY AMONG THE HEATHEN. It may be a light thing to us that his Name is unknown or dishonoured among the heathen; but it is no light matter in the sight of God. He does not confine his gaze to the little spot of light where he is recognized and loved. He is the Creator of the universe, and he is concerned with what happens everywhere throughout his dominion. Consider why he desires his glory to be spread among the heathen. 1. *For its own sake.* God cares for his glory and desires to be glorified. Such a conception applied to a man would suggest selfishness. This is not the case with God, because his glory resides in his goodness. The spread of his glory is the vindication of righteousness. The eternal claims of holiness demand assertion. To suppress them is to give the victory to sin; to spread the glory of God is to assert them. 2. *For the sake of the heathen.* Ignorance of God's glory is their loss. To know God is life eternal. It is for the supreme good of men that they should understand their heavenly Father. "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace" (Job xxii. 21).

II. GOD HAS MEANS FOR SPREADING HIS GLORY AMONG THE HEATHEN. 1. *In judgments.* This seems to be the method suggested in the chapter now under consideration. The restoration of Israel and the accompanying overthrow of her enemies will strike dismay into the host of the enemy, and so impress them with the might and majesty of the true God. This is a fearful process in the eyes of the heathen, and yet it is educational, and may help to lead them out of superstition and foolish opposition to wiser ways. God arrests the careless now by his judgments. 2. *In the gospel.* When the gospel is preached to the heathen God's glory is revealed among them—surely the happier method of making it known. This was already foreshadowed in Old Testament times (Isa. lii. 15). It was in part accomplished by the labours of St. Paul. Now, we must ever bear in mind that this is God's work. Though human agents preach the gospel, God himself shows forth his glory in his truth. He too awakens the souls of the hearers by his Spirit. All perception of the glory of God comes from his own revelation of himself.

III. CHRISTIANS SHOULD TAKE PART IN SPREADING GOD'S GLORY AMONG THE HEATHEN. We sometimes hear missionary enterprises described as quixotic schemes of amiable fanatics, and so-called practical people tell us that we had much better spend our money and our energies in endeavouring to better the condition of the poor of our own cities. "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matt. xxiii. 23). It is Christ's command that his gospel should be preached to all people, and whether our wisdom commend the command or not, if we are true Christians it is our plain duty to render unquestioning obedience (Matt. xxviii. 19). But the heathen need the knowledge of the truth of Christ. Experience proves that the most ignorant and the most cultivated can both receive it and profit by it. There is no more practical work than that of wise labour in the missionary field. It is the bounden duty of all Christians to support it. The Church that has no missionary spirit is not Christian, for it has not the Spirit of Christ.

Vers. 23, 24.—*Sin and its consequences.* I. THE DREADFUL EVIL OF SIN. Pain is a mystery, but sin is a darker mystery. We instinctively shrink from death as the last dread enemy, but death is not so great a foe as sin. We must go to the Bible for a revelation of sin in its extent and its depth. The Greeks were acute thinkers on most subjects connected with human experience, but they were singularly obtuse to moral distinctions. In the Bible we see a true mirror held up to the world's sin. There we discover that events, which the secular historians would ascribe to political causes, have moral causes behind them. Thus the Captivity would seem to the eye of ordinary observers to be a natural result of the fanatical patriotism of a little mountain kingdom—the Montenegro of antiquity—when opposed to the irresistible march of a great conquering empire. But more lay behind. The corruption of the Jews made them an easy prey to their enemy, and their sin deprived them of the providential protection of God. This sin is seen in four aspects. 1. *In relation to righteousness.* It is iniquity. It is falling short of what is right, an unjust treatment of life, a living lie. The sinner is unequal. He does not truly balance his life. His whole being is corrupted and distorted. 2. *In relation to God.* It is a trespass against him. The prodigal confesses that he has sinned against Heaven, as well as in his father's sight (Luke xv. 21). David even describes the murder of Uriah as a sin against God only, so utterly does the transgression of God's Law swallow up all other considerations (Ps. li. 4). Whenever we sin we directly rebel against our Father. Sin always has this ugly personal feature. 3. *In relation to purity.* Uncleanness. 4. *In relation to law.* Transgression.

II. THE DISMAL CONSEQUENCES OF SIN. 1. *The loss of the vision of God.* "Therefore hid I my face from them." This is the first consequence of sin. It is reaped immediately the soul falls away from God. Without holiness it is impossible to see him (Matt. v. 8). To some it may seem a light penalty. Like Adam and Eve, they may even try to hide themselves from God. But the attempt is vain, because, though we may easily lose sight of God, he never ceases to behold us. Moreover, though we may not be aware of our loss, it is not the less great. But to the sensitive soul this spiritual consequence of sin is most bitter to endure. Such a one will beseech God not to hide his countenance, and will cry, "Take not thy Holy Spirit

from me" (Ps. li. 11). All joy and hope vanish from the Christian life when the sweet vision of God is darkened by sin. 2. *Fearful external ruin.* "And gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword." If men do not care for the present spiritual consequences of sin, other more easily recognized consequences will follow. The most blunt and hardened soul can be made to quake under the wrath of God.

In conclusion, observe that all this was to be known to the heathen, (1) that they might not boast themselves as though the result were directly due to their prowess; (2) that they might not despise God as though his designs were frustrated; (3) that they might take warning. God warns us by the history of the past punishment of sin. But he also points out a way of escape in Jesus Christ, who came to save his people from their sins.

Vers. 25—29.—*The glorious restoration.* I. THE PEOPLE WHO ENJOY IT. 1. *The people of God.* This is promised for the Jews, the ancient people of God. God does not forget his people in their captivity any more than he forgot them in their Egyptian bondage. Now, we know that God regards the whole human race as one family (Acts xvii. 26). Though many reject him and many know him not, he cares for all. As all belong by right to their heavenly Father, so the perfect restoration in Christ is now offered to all men. 2. *Sinners.* This gracious promise is not only for the unfortunate —like the Hebrews in Egypt; it is for the guilty who were driven into captivity on account of their own wickedness. This fact shows (1) the grace of God, who is willing to be reconciled to his worst foes, to pardon his rebel subjects, to receive back his lost and disgraced children; and (2) the hope of the world. The peculiarity of the mission of Christ was that he came to seek and to save that which was lost. The most degraded may hope to share in the glorious restoration of Israel if they will rightly seek to have their part in it.

II. THE MEANS BY WHICH IT IS BROUGHT ABOUT. 1. *God's saving work.* God brought back the captivity of Israel. If Nebuchadnezzar was his servant for punishment, Cyrus was even his "Messiah" for restoration (Isa. xlv. 1). The great restoration of souls is God's work. He does not wait for men to regenerate their own characters, and then consent to give them a welcome home. He himself effects the regeneration. It was God's thought to send his Son to be the Saviour of the world. This Divine action springs (1) from God's mercy; (2) from his jealousy for his holy Name. God is most glorified in saving his people. Righteousness is most honoured not by the punishment of sin, but by the cure of it. 2. *On condition of confession.* "And they shall take upon them their shame, and all their trespass which they have committed against me." The restored Jews will own the guilt of the sin that drove them into captivity. Thus the chastisement will produce its bitter but wholesome fruit. God only forgives sin on condition of man's confession (1 John i. 9). When the penitent takes the shame of his sin God removes the guilt of it.

III. THE BLESSINGS WHICH IT BRINGS. 1. *Return to the old home and its privileges.* The Jews came back to Palestine from their captivity. Redeemed man is restored to the true human inheritance which he has lost by sin. Science, art, literature, social and domestic life, etc., will be enjoyed at their best when men are regenerated in heart. The earth will never yield her choicest increase until the people of God inherit it. But with these secular advantages, and far above them, is restoration to the spiritual home —to the kingdom of heaven here, to the glory of heaven hereafter. 2. *Peace and security.* "When they dwell safely in their land, and none make them afraid." This suggests a striking contrast to the former position, when Israel was harassed by enemies on every side—not the least being those of their own household in the long feud between the northern and the southern kingdoms. That feud was now ended for ever. Still, the subsequent time was scarcely one of solid security. We must look to the spiritual restoration for the perfect accomplishment of the happy vision. The redeemed people of God enjoy peace and safety. Christ said, "My peace I give unto you" (John xiv. 27). 3. *Closer communion with God.* Then they shall know God better than before, with the knowledge of experience, and enjoy the never-failing light of his countenance. This is the Christian's highest privilege.

Ver. 29.—*The restored vision of God.* This is a great, we may say the supreme and

final, result of the restoration of Israel. While the people are eagerly craving a return to their farms and villages, with temporal prosperity, the prophet teaches them that, though these advantages are to be received in the good time coming, a better blessing will be the restored vision of God enjoyed by means of the pouring out of his Spirit upon the house of Israel. This is the best, the highest, the most spiritual, result of Christ's redemption of the world.

I. THE BEATIFIC VISION OF GOD. God will no more hide his face. 1. *The restoration of God's favour.* The averted countenance signifies disapproval. God hides his countenance when he refuses to hold communion with those of his creatures with whom he is angry. Therefore we are here reminded that sin leads to an action on God's part—to his veiling his bright countenance. There is then a need, not only for man to be reconciled to God, but for God to change his grieved and wrathful attitude towards man. This is an essential element in the atonement, which is suggested by the word "propitiation" (Rom. iii. 25; 1 John ii. 2). When God ceases to hide his countenance he looks favourably on his people. 2. *The enjoyment of God's presence.* The favour of a king secures many privileges, and the favour of God the best privileges; but no gift of God can equal in value the enjoyment of his own presence To behold his countenance is to have the greatest of blessings. (1) God is our Father; to see him is to be at home. (2) He is the centre of all light and truth; the vision of God is the highest knowledge. (3) He is supreme brightness and beauty; to behold God is to gaze on the "beatific vision." Heaven consists in the undimmed vision of God. 3. *An eternal blessedness.* God will not hide his face any more. The hiding was an abnormal thing. The words before us suggest the idea that it is natural for God to reveal himself, and that the hiding was something temporally superinduced by man's sin. Not to know God is a monstrously defective experience. When the black cloud has been dispelled the sun will shine out in unwaning splendour. There is no fading of the glory of heaven. The blessedness of God's restored people is eternal.

II. THE INSPIRATION THAT RESTORES THE VISION OF GOD. This vision has been lost, and God now promises a restoration of it, indicating the means by which the happy result will be brought to pass. It is because God has poured out his Spirit upon the house of Israel. Revelation is a result of inspiration. This is the process in prophecy. God reveals his will through prophets, *i.e.* by means of inspired men. Here we see that the spiritual revelation of the saint, who may learn no new truth, but who is brought into the enjoyment of the favour of God and into communion with him, is also a result of inspiration. 1. *Christ's redemption leads to a bestowal of the Spirit of God.* John the Baptist promised that he who came after him would baptize with the Holy Ghost (Matt. iii. 11). Christ promised the Spirit as "the Comforter" (John xiv. 16, 17). Pentecost followed the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Christ has ascended up on high to give gifts unto men; and the best of his gifts, the gift that includes all others, is that of the Holy Spirit. 2. *The bestowal of the Spirit of God unveils the countenance of God.* (1) It purges men's hearts of the thick film of doubt and earthly-mindedness that hides the vision of God. (2) It puts men into right relations with God, so that be can manifest his grace to them. (3) It directly opens the eyes of the soul to see the truth of God. (4) It is itself a communing Spirit communicating God to us.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 7.—*The Lord's care for his own Name.* In several passages of his prophecies, Ezekiel lays stress upon the honour shown to the Name of Jehovah. He does this especially in connection with the predictions of Israel's deliverance, and of the defeat and humiliation of the foes of Israel and of God. The idiom is a Hebrew one, and deserves attention; while the broad moral lessons conveyed are of a nature to strengthen our faith in the providential government of God.

I. WHAT IS GOD'S NAME? An examination of the passages in Old Testament Scripture in which the expression occurs will convince the student that by the Name we are to understand the attributes and the character of God. It is generally held that the name *Jehovah* signifies the self-existing Being; and it might be argued that

all Divine perfections are involved in and may be developed from the very definition. But it will be found that when "the Name" of God is used, as in this passage, it calls attention to these two attributes of Deity. 1. He is righteous in his judgments. 2. He is faithful to his promises.

II. AMONG WHOM WOULD GOD MAKE HIS NAME KNOWN? To whom would he have his attributes and the characteristics of his moral government revealed with clearness and unmistakable power? The text gives an explicit answer to this question. 1. Among the Hebrews: "In the midst of my people Israel." These, his people, had been prone to forget or to misunderstand his Name, and needed that their attention should be recalled to the revelation which Jehovah had given of himself. 2. Among the heathen: "The heathen shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel." In this case it was not a revival of knowledge that had lapsed or grown dim; it was a fresh communication. Those who had trusted in their false gods should have their foolish confidence shaken; those who had thought lightly of Jehovah should learn to revere his power, and (better still) should learn to contemplate the moral attributes of the Supreme Power, and thus receive a special illumination, which might be for their spiritual good.

III. HOW WOULD GOD EFFECT THIS END, AND MAKE HIS NAME KNOWN? 1. By delivering his people. The dangers threatening Israel were great, and their foes were formidable. All the more marvellous was the interposition wrought upon their behalf. The Name of God, as the great Deliverer, was manifested and glorified by the experience of the rescued and saved. 2. By destroying the enemies of his people. In this manner the fame of the Most High, the God of hosts, was spread abroad, so that distant nations were impressed by the revelation of his power, by the proof of his universal sway.

APPLICATION. The preacher and teacher of religion should never lose sight of the fact that his one great aim is the honour and exaltation of the Name of God. This is often utterly misrepresented, either through the childishness or the malice of the enemies of religion, and it is affirmed to involve an unworthy conception of the Deity, as though in vanity God delighted in the adulations of men. This is anthropomorphism indeed. The Name of God is truth, righteousness, holiness, and love. To manifest and extol his Name is to display the supremacy of his glorious attributes. And than this man can have no higher object at which to aim. If man's chief end is to glorify God, if human life does not find its law and its aim in itself, then it is evident that the exaltation of the Divine Name is a worthy and most noble end for the Christian man, and for the Christian minister, to set before him.—T.

Ver. 10.—*The spoiler spoiled.* There is something very picturesque and impressive in this prediction. The foes of Israel, under the leadership of Gog, are represented as defeated, scattered, and slain. Their bodies are strewn over the soil which they came in their haughty self-confidence to conquer and to possess. The dwellers in the cities of Israel are depicted as going out upon the plains to gather the weapons of war—the shields, the bows, and the spears—which lie upon the ground where the mighty have fallen, and as collecting them that they may use them as fuel. The Israelites spare their own forests, and use the weapons of their enemies in place of the firewood they have been accustomed to cut. Thus for seven years their necessities in this respect are supplied! The spoiler is spoiled, and those who robbed them are robbed in turn. This poetical hyperbole sets forth the utter confusion of the enemies of God's people, and the signal and complete character of Jehovah's interposition and delivering power and mercy. It is impossible to confine such statements as these to any event which has ever happened or ever will happen in any particular time or place. They enunciate a principle of world-wide and lasting application. Sin is the great spoiler that has entered into the world with the view of robbing and ruining mankind, and Christ is the great Deliverer, who spoils the spoiler, leads captivity captive, and rescues from the threatened destruction.

I. THIS FACT IS ENTIRELY CONTRARY TO HUMAN UNDERSTANDING AND EXPECTATION.

II. THIS FACT IS AN EXEMPLIFICATION OF A DIVINE PRINCIPLE THAT THE BATTLE IS NOT TO THE STRONG.

III. THIS FACT IS A PROOF OF GOD'S CARE AND SOLICITUDE FOR HIS OWN.

IV. AND OF GOD'S UNIVERSAL GOVERNMENT AND CONTROL.

V. THIS FACT IS AN EARNEST OF FINAL AND EVERLASTING SECURITY AND VICTORY FOR THOSE WHOM GOD DELIVERS AND REDEEMS.

APPLICATION. In preaching the gospel of Christ, stress should be laid upon the Lord's power, as well as upon his love. Christ, in his resurrection, was proved to be "the Son of God with power." The same might which was then manifested is ever exercised for the protection and preservation of all sincere Christians. They who adhere faithfully to the Saviour need to be encouraged by the assurance that Omnipotence is upon their side. Enemies and opposition they may have to encounter; but the Lord will deliver their foes into their hands. They shall be more than conquerors through him that loved them. There is therefore no ground for fear or for depression. The Lord shall fight for them, and they shall hold their peace. In returning and in rest they shall be saved. They shall pass through victory to rest.—T.

Vers. 23, 24.—*The Divine reason for Israel's captivity.* Israel is in prophecy the representative of mankind, of the "new humanity" that God has redeemed to himself and appointed to everlasting life. In every dispensation, in all God's dealings with men, there has been the manifestation of wisdom. Nothing that God has done has been done without a purpose, an intention. Faith convinces us of this. And Scripture sometimes, as in this passage, gives us an insight into the Divine counsels, and points out to us the particular reasons by which the action of Eternal Wisdom has been actuated in the treatment which we have received, especially in so far as we have sinned against God and done wickedly.

I. THE FACT OF ISRAEL'S SIN. Various terms are employed to set this forth: "iniquity," "trespass," "uncleanness," "transgression." By these various terms the Lord, speaking by his prophet, denotes our attitude in respect to God, in respect to moral law, in respect to the ideal of perfect human conduct. Nationally and individually, Israel transgressed and sinned.

II. THE DIVINE DISPLEASURE WITH ISRAEL. The Lord expresses this by a remarkable idiom: "I hid my face from them." The metaphor is simple. As favour is denoted by an open, radiant, smiling countenance, so the veiling or averting of the face which is clouded with a frown denotes censure and dissatisfaction. Making proper allowance for the imperfections of human speech, and the impossibility of using adequate language when referring to the Supreme, we may assuredly say that there is nothing in this representation derogatory to God. It is no infirmity, but a perfection of our Divine Ruler, that he is not indifferent to the moral conduct of his subjects. He is angry with the wicked every day. He cannot look upon sin.

III. ISRAEL'S ENEMIES THE MINISTERS OF DIVINE RETRIBUTION. "I gave them into the hands of their adversaries;" "According to their transgressions did I unto them." There were many forms of chastisement from which Israel suffered. This was perhaps the sorest. David entreated the Lord that, whatever might happen to him, he might not be delivered into the hands of his enemies. It was an enfeebling and an humiliating form of chastisement which God's people were called upon to endure. The attacks of the foe may not have been in themselves justifiable, but the Ruler of nations (as is shown nowhere more effectively than in this book) employs instruments to fulfil his purposes that are animated by no desire for justice and for the kingdom of God. The surrounding nations were employed as the scourge by which the culprits were chastised.

IV. ISRAEL'S CAPTIVITY AS PUNITIVE DISCIPLINE. It is remarkable that the chosen people of Jehovah, whose nationality was cradled (so to speak) in the bondage of Egypt, were called upon, centuries afterwards, to endure the bitter humiliation of exile and captivity in the East. They "went into captivity for their iniquity." Punishment is thus declared to be a characteristic of Divine government when dealing with the sinful and rebellious. There were certain ends answered by the special form which Israel's punishment and humiliation assumed; it is well known that, when the people returned, they returned free from the taint of idolatry and from all temptation to return to the heathen practices into which they had been misled. Still, it was punishment which they endured—punishment for past offences, as well as correction with a view to future obedience and subjection. They learned by bitter experience that "the way of transgressors is hard."—T.

Vers. 25—29.—*Israel's restoration a proof of Divine mercy.* The reader of this passage cannot but be impressed with the conviction that it has reference, not only to Israel, but to the redeemed race of man. His interest in it is not merely historical; it is personal and moral. There is a largeness, a fulness, in the promises given, which can scarcely be exhausted by the immediate reference to the return from the Oriental captivity.

I. DELIVERANCE AND RESTORATION ARE WROUGHT BY THE SAME POWER THAT DECREED CAPTIVITY. "He that scattereth Israel shall gather." The Father who smites has pity; and he who wounds is he also who heals. The righteous Ruler and Judge who visits transgression with penalties proves himself to be the God to whom belong forgivenesses. He is not indifferent to sin; yet he delights in mercy. Men are wont to picture to themselves a Deity all wrath or all benignity. But revelation shows us, in that Supreme Being who hates sin and who corrects the sinner, "the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe."

II. TEMPORAL BLESSINGS, SECURITY AND PROSPERITY, ARE ASSURED TO THE RESTORED. To Israel the promise was given that they should, upon their return, dwell safely in their land, and none should make them afraid. We know that this promise was only partially realized, and that it must accordingly, so far as it refers to Israel, be considered as comparative; the people enjoyed a measure of security and peace beyond what they had experienced or could expect to experience. It is right to regard prosperity and all external blessings as the gift of God's goodness. And whether enjoyed now in this Christian dispensation or in the period of millennial happiness to which the Church looks forward, it must ever be considered as the gift of Divine bounty and the expression of Divine love.

III. SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS ARE PROMISED AS THE CHOICEST EXPRESSION OF GOD'S FAVOUR TO THE RESTORED. 1. These blessings are conveyed by the outpouring of the Spirit of God. It is impossible to do other than refer this event to the Day of Pentecost, and to the dispensation of the Spirit which was then inaugurated. Other prophets concurred with Ezekiel in this prediction; and Peter authoritatively recognized the fulfilment of such prophetic words in the bestowal of the promise of the Father, and in that effusion which commenced at Pentecost, but which has never ceased. 2. These blessings are equivalent to the manifestation of the Divine favour. The Lord's promise was no more to hide his face from his restored ones. We know that Israel passed through many afflictions subsequently to the restoration; and that, on account of the rejection of the Messiah, Israel was condemned to endure Divine displeasure. We are therefore constrained to refer this promise to the accepted people of God, to whom is no condemnation, and who walk in the light of his countenance. 3. These blessings are the occasion of the acknowledgment and of the hallowing of the Lord's Name. As is ever the case, God is himself made the End of all. All things are of him and to him.

IV. IMPRESSION FOR GOOD IS TO BE PRODUCED UPON THE NATIONS. In former times Israel was a lesson for the world, as is the Church of Christ in these latter days. In the favour shown to God's people, his Divine hand is recognized. He is glorified both by the affliction and by the elevation of his own. All nations and all ages are summoned to behold the work of the Lord, to submit to his power and to adore his wisdom. His treatment of his own people does not end with them; it is designed for the instruction and for the highest benefit of mankind. There shall thus be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.—T.

Vers. 1—21.—*The terrible doom of rebels.* We may regard it as certain that this prophecy has in view the final conflict between good and evil in this world. Already, in the preceding prophecies, Ezekiel has been portraying the prosperous times of Messiah's reign; and now he has a vision of an age still more remote, when shall come the final clash of arms between God and a rebel world. We may take it that Satan, or Apollyon, will be the real leader in this final onset. All the forces of infidelity, and superstition, and vice, and earthly pomp, and carnal force will be led against the kingdom of Emmanuel. The conflict will be terrible, and defeat of the world-power will be complete and irreparable. The description of Ezekiel is most vivid and impressive. It was thrown in this parabolic form in order to meet the exigencies of that particular age.

I. MARTIAL AGGRESSION IS GOD'S SNARE FOR DESTRUCTION. When a man resists every friendly counsel of God, God allows him to pursue his own way, and removes even the restraints which before impeded his ruin. In a similar way he deals with kings and with nations. "Ephraim is joined to his idols: let him alone!" Thus God dealt with Pharaoh. In the first stages of Moses' intercourse with Pharaoh, we read, "And Pharaoh hardened his heart." But as the negotiation proceeded, and the proud king grew more obstinate, we read, "The Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart." It is true that "God tempteth no man," that is, allures no man into sin. Yet, by taking out of the way former barriers or ceasing to remonstrate, God helps on the final catastrophe. There is no advantage in prolonging the crisis. There is great disadvantage. Give a bad man full scope for his vile passions, and he soon rushes into the pit of ruin. In this way God purposes to deal with Gog: "Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee." Nevertheless, God continues to say, "I will cause thee to come up, . . . and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel." Worldly success is only a covered snare.

II. HUMAN WEAPONS ARE POWERLESS AGAINST GOD'S KINGDOM. "I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand." Neither material instruments of assault nor human violence of any kind can injure the kingdom of Christ. That kingdom is spiritual, and has its foundations in the spiritual natures of men, so that ordinary weapons of war are pointless. The Jewish rulers imagined that they had uprooted the cause of Jesus when they nailed him with iron spikes to the tree; but three days later they discovered how powerless they were, and how deathless his kingdom was. If falsehood shall prove itself mightier than truth; if rebellion shall show itself mightier than loyalty; if wrong can develop a greater power than right;—then, and then alone, will God's kingdom succumb. In this great contest weapons must be suitable, or they will break in the warrior's hand and leave him dismayed and defeated.

III. WAR MATERIAL CONVERTED INTO BLESSING. "The shields and bucklers, the bows and arrows, the handstaves and the spears," served as household fuel for seven years. The period mentioned is intended to denote a sacred completeness. Not once merely, but often, the weapons of infidelity have been changed into instruments of righteousness. The devil's artillery has been turned against himself. Lord Lyttelton and Mr. West undertook to explode Christianity, and sat down to prepare their weapons; but they came from the armoury with a splendid defence of the Christian faith. Saul of Tarsus set out on his journey to assail the infant Church; but on the way he changed sides, and sharpened all his weapons for the defence of the gospel. The death-bed of Voltaire was enough to drive all his followers into the ranks of King Jesus. Tom Paine's writings were so coarse and scurrilous that present-day infidels are put to shame by them. The faggots of martyr-fires have kindled a light which has led many into heaven.

IV. GOD'S FOES ARE DOOMED TO A TERRIBLE DESTRUCTION. The prophet's delineation of the overthrow of proud antagonists is graphic and harrowing. The keen sword of death is used with terrific force. The numbers of the dead become a peril to health and to life. A considerable valley is set apart as a necropolis. Seven months, *i.e.* a whole cycle of time, is required for the sickening work of sepulture. So terrible and complete is the carnage that the whole population of the land employs itself in burying the dead. Not a single soldier among the foe survives to tell to posterity the tale of woe. It is an unsparing slaughter. Thus shall perish all who refuse to serve their Maker and to work righteousness. Obedience is life; rebellion is death—death without alleviation.

V. BASEST DISHONOUR IS ADDED TO DESTRUCTION. With the eye of a prophet Ezekiel foresees the contempt and dishonour in store for the slain. Their dead bodies shall become a banquet for the brutes. Birds of prey shall feed upon human flesh. Wild beasts from the forest shall quench their thirst in the blood of warrior-kings The doom, though severe, is equitable. These slaves of wickedness—braggarts in crime—had degenerated to a level lower than the beasts of the field, and lower than the beasts shall be their final portion. As men fear dishonour more than they fear death, so, with thoughtful kindness, God would deter them from sin by the prospect of coming shame.

VI. GOD'S TERRITORY SHALL BE PURIFIED. "That they may cleanse the land." Whatever measures are required to purge God's universe from sin, these measures shall, sooner or later, be employed. Our God has transcendent patience with men; but no advantage can accrue to an undue prolonging of probation. When measures of restoration to virtue have been well tried, then the earth shall be swept of its impurities with the besom of death. The God of holiness will not allow his house to be defiled for ever. The evil of sin shall cease. God shall be "all in all." The final triumph of God is certain. As surely as this globe was created this globe shall be purified. The same voice that said, "Let there be light," has said also, "There shall be no more death." To the eye of the inspired prophet this grand terminus of evil was visible. "It is done! saith the Lord God;" and God's promise is as sure as its performance.—D.

Vers. 21—29.—*God's revelation of himself a fount of blessing.* Ignorance of God and strength of animal appetite are the two primal founts of ungodliness. Animal appetite is, in order of time, the first source of vice; but as the understanding opens to receive knowledge, this source of evil may be checked. To this end God deigns to make himself known. A clear vision of God is a strong antidote to evil propensity. Faith in God is the great regenerative principle. Therefore, through the procession of the ages, God has been revealing his qualities and excellences to our race. From this passage we learn—

I. THAT GOD REVEALS HIMSELF AS THE ACTIVE RULER IN HUMAN AFFAIRS. Such men in Chaldea as had faith in their idols would attribute the prosperity of their kingdom and their success in war to the power of their deities. Others, and probably the larger portion, would conclude that military fortunes were matters of chance, and that the gods took little, if any, interest in the affairs of men. Human industry, sagacity, and courage,—these seemed then, as now, the main factors in success. The general impression was that the gods lived in remote serenity, sublimely indifferent to the needs and strifes of men. Unbelief, violence, and stoicism followed. Our God took pains to dispel this mistake. The living God takes a Fatherly interest in every man—in his personal, domestic, and national concerns. Not a hair of his head can be touched without the cognizance of God. He administers joy and sorrow, success and disappointment, with judicious care. The God of heaven manifests a friendly activity in all human affairs, as great as if this globe were the sole object of his care. "In all our afflictions he is afflicted."

II. THAT GOD REVEALS HIMSELF AS THE REAL FOUNT OF ALL BLESSING. It was God's endeavour to make it clear to the world that Israel's prosperity was Jehovah's gift; that Israel's exile was the effect of Jehovah's anger. When Israel escaped from Egyptian bondage, plainly it was by the interposition of Jehovah. Their successful march through the desert was due to the leadership of God. Their triumphal march through Canaan was widely attributed to the personal power of Jehovah. As often as they loyally served him he smiled upon their fields and gave them prolific harvests. As often as they forsook him disaster befell them. If they asked his guidance he directed them in the choice of a King. From his hand they had personal liberty, just laws, beneficent government, agricultural plenty, national security, and the joys of ennobling religion. He taught their "hands to war, their fingers to fight." Unless the Hebrews were as blind as a door-post, they must have perceived that every good they had came from the liberal hand of Jehovah. To them he was the Fountain of life.

III. THAT GOD REVEALS HIMSELF TO THE WORLD AS THE WORKER OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. "The heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity." We must never lose sight of the fact that God had raised up Israel specially to reveal to the world the righteousness of God. The Hebrews were ordained to educate the world in the truths and principles of righteousness. They were appointed to be *par excellence* a moral people, a nation in whom conscience was highly developed. The gods of paganism were renowned for strength and for cunning. The idea of righteousness they had not deified. Hence Jehovah was concerned to be known as essential purity. To him sin is intolerable—the root of all discord and all misery. The exile was no haphazard. It was Divine punishment for grievous sin. Defeat in war was the rod of God's righteous anger. Hence also the Jewish subjuga-

tion would not be permanent. The element of life was in the people still; and, as soon as repentance and moral renovation appeared, return to independence and to Palestine followed. It was a moral discipline.

IV. THAT PREVIOUS REVELATIONS OF GOD WERE PREPARATORY TO THE GREAT REVELATION OF HIS GRACE. "Therefore thus saith the Lord, Now will I . . . have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy Name." The glory of God is his compassion—pure, unstinted, self-sacrificing love. To Moses, who craved to see God's glory, the responding voice proclaimed, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious." Micah asked, in profound surprise, "Who is a God like unto thee?" In what respect did he mean? In the splendours of his kingly state? In the might of his arm? In the range of his government? Nay. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin?" Herein lies the central excellence of Jehovah, viz. that, providing for the violated interests of justice by his own suffering, he freely forgives, renovates, and uplifts the guilty sons of men. Men have not seen the full significance of his Name, nor conjectured the dazzling radiance of his goodness, until they have seen his mercy—seen him as the Healer of the fallen. But his mercy is a righteous mercy. Whom he pardons, he purifies. Righteousness is the foundation on which he erects the magnificent structure of his grace. So far as we know at present, this is the climax of his self-revelations.

V. THAT THE PERPETUAL ENJOYMENT OF HIS FAVOUR IS GUARANTEED BY THE GIFT OF HIS SPIRIT. "Neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God." The possession of prosperity and blessing outside a man depends upon the state of feeling and desire within a man. And a right state of mind Godward is secured to the genuine Israelite by the indwelling of God's mighty Spirit. If men cannot withstand temptation in their native and unaided state, God will not leave them to themselves. As the supreme culmination of all blessing, God will impart himself to humble, suppliant men. He will inweave his own Spirit into our spirit. He will unite himself with us by indissoluble bonds—will pour his life into the empty channels of our nature. His great salvation is first internal, then external. We cannot miss our highest destiny if God, by his Spirit, be within us. Then, surely, we have the highest guarantee of safety, elevation, and noble joy. We shall be renovated in the very root-principles of our nature, moulded into a higher life by the silent workmanship of his Spirit. His mercy will never forsake us.—D.

Ver. 3.—*Divine interposition.* God would smite the bow out of the left hand and cause the arrows to fall out of the right hand of the impious invader. He would disarm him; he would interpose to break his purpose, to arrest him in his evil course. We have here—

I. GOD'S RIGHTEOUS INTERPOSITION. God permits evil—in the form of bad institutions, wicked governments or powers, unprincipled men—to go certain lengths, and when they think they have finally established themselves he lays his hand upon them, takes away their weapons, reduces them to helplessness and humiliation. "A fool doth not understand it," but the very prosperity of the wicked is only a preparation for their utter and irrecoverable downfall; "When the workers of iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever" (Ps. xcii. 6, 7). God interposes to smite the weapons out of the hand of the disloyal and of the mischievous when: 1. He causes death to overtake the guilty before his time. And he is continually doing this; for under the action of his laws, which are at once severe and beneficent, the vicious man is the victim of his vice and the violent man of his violence. The one can sow no more of his pernicious seed, and the other can do no more of his lawless harm, because God has smitten them, and their weapons fall from their hand. 2. He makes the unprincipled adventurer to suffer an irretrievable disaster; when the man who has climbed to a throne by usurpation and bloodshed, and wielded authority in the exercise of despotic power, suffers some disaster which sends him to the lonely rock or to the quiet country house for the rest of his days. 3. He breaks the schemes of the wily plotter; when some dissatisfied, and consequently malignant and even (it may be) murderous citizen determines to wreak his vengeance on those whom he takes to be his enemies, and when, in the midst of his machinations, his plans are discovered and overthrown.

(1) *Let the wicked pause* before they begin their wicked course. They take many things into the account; let them not leave *this* one out of their reckoning, that when they have reached the field of their proposed achievement, though they may reach it well armed and eager for the fight, there may come down upon them, out of the heavens, a blow which will smite their weapons out of their hand, and leave them "naked to their enemies." (2) *Let the righteous hope*, even if they be outnumbered and out-weaponed. It is not every well-equipped army that wins the battle. Victory does not necessarily go with the latest rifles and the cannon that carry the furthest. There is one Power that presides over all the forces that are at work; *when* he will and *as* he will, he will interpose on behalf of his children, and those who seemed so strong and so invincible will stand like a disarmed soldier in the midst and in the power of his enemies. It is worth while, by way of contrast, to glance at—

II. GOD'S GRACIOUS RESUMPTION. He who "smites the bow out of the hand" of the enemy is the One who gently and graciously takes the sword out of the hand of his own soldiers, that he may place on their head the "crown of righteousness," the "crown of life." When God sends the feebleness which can do no more active work below, or when he comes to us in death, he resumes the weapon he once put into our hands, and either (in the one case) bids us wait his time and our reward, or (in the other) he takes us where a stronger and a wiser hand will wield a far better weapon in a much nobler sphere.—C.

Ver. 5.—*Falling on the field.* "Thou shalt fall upon the open field." These words are clearly to be taken as—

I. A SERIOUS PENALTY. The hosts of the invader should encounter those whom they thought to defeat, and be by them defeated and slain; they would perish where they fought, beneath the heavens, on the open field. Now, a life of sin is only too likely to lead to such a death as men would not willingly die, and such a death "on the open field" of battle is fitted to suggest: 1. *A death of violence*, or in some way that is unnatural. Sin begets strife, hatred, jealousy, the dominance of some evil passion; and in how many cases does this lead to the loss of life by some unnatural means! Instead of passing peacefully away, according to the order of nature, dying under his own roof and in his own chamber, a sinful man, more especially if he be a man who indulges in the greater transgressions, is likely enough to die an unnatural death in some form or other. 2. *A death in loneliness.* The hosts of Gog were to be stretched in the valley, and, though they would indeed keep one another company, how different is the near neighbourhood of wounded and dying soldiers from the presence of the nearest and dearest of human kindred and of beloved friends! How often has a sinful course led the erring one to die a lonely death, far from a father's grasp, from a mother's ministry, from the sympathy and succour of dear ones at home! 3. *A death in the midst of life.* It is not the aged, but the strong and the young, who go forth to battle and die on the open field. The army of the slain in the open field is a large company of men who have perished before their time; their days are incomplete; they have been cut off from many (or from some) of the possibilities of life, of its engagements and achievements. This, too, is the frequent, the continually recurring, consequence of an evil course. They who enter upon it may reckon that their life will not hold all, or nearly all, the blessings which are the heritage of the holy and the wise. 4. *A death without the consolations of piety.* These are seldom, indeed, found "on the open field;" and they are usually absent from the experience of the man who abandons himself to an evil life. But while these words are meant as a penalty, they *may* be regarded, on the other hand, as—

II. AN ACCEPTABLE PROMISE. For the Christian workman would most willingly "fall upon the open field" of sacred usefulness. There is no vision of death more welcome to an earnest spirit than that of an end arrived at in the very midst of useful and fruitful activities. *Good* it may be to spend some months in retirement and contemplation before the eyes close in death and open in immortality; yet shall we not say that it is *better* to work on, in untiring and joyous devotion, building up the kingdom of Christ, cheering and comforting the feeble, raising up the fallen, leading the undecided into the fold of the good Shepherd, striking strong and faithful blows for righteousness and heavenly wisdom, and, "falling on the field" of spiritual conflict,

pass from the battle-ground of earth to the peaceful shores and the blessed scenes of heaven?—C.

Vers. 17—20.—*Degradation and reversal.* The scene before us is painful; it hardly befits description; we cannot dwell upon it without turning from it with repulsion. But we may so far realize it in our thought as to learn two lessons respecting the issue of evil, the sad and painful consequences of sin. These are—

I. DEGRADATION. The unclean birds of the air and the foul beasts of the field eating the flesh and drinking the blood "of the princes of the earth"! To what a miserable and shameful death has human greatness, human dignity, fallen! For those who had sat on the loftiest seats of honour, and moved in the highest spheres of action, to lie unburied on the enemy's soil, and to furnish a meal for carrion-birds and for "four-footed beasts"! Could dishonour or degradation go further than this? And is not degradation the constant end of persistent wrong, of wilful and wanton disobedience to the Word of God? And shall we not acknowledge, when we think of it, that some of those things which seem to most men allowable, and some which seem even honourable and desirable, are, in the sight of God, deplorable and condemnable, because they are really a *degradation* and a descent? This is so when: 1. The powers of the human soul are exhausted upon very small things; when men seek their chief satisfaction, not in their relationship to God, in their service of Christ, but in the petty honours and conventional proprieties, and sensuous gratifications of this passing world. To allow the things of utter unimportance to absorb the manifold and noble powers of heart and mind, leaving no room for the heavenly and the Divine, is surely a pitiful degradation. Men do not know, they cannot see, how they are lowering their life, how they are dishonouring themselves. Similarly and more obviously when: 2. The lower passions tyrannize over the soul; when covetousness, or the craving for alcoholic or for social excitement, or the demon of lust, or jealousy, or overweening and maddening ambition, possesses the soul and leads it astray; any one of these passions will lead a man down into very dark depths; he has become the prey of the spoiler. 3. Human life is reduced to a pursuit of mere amusement or passing gratification. 4. The forces of a country are employed, not in the enrichment and the elevation of the people, but in fighting the armies and despoiling the strength and wealth of neighbouring powers.

II. REVERSAL. Ordinarily and naturally birds and beasts provide the sacrifice for men. Here, however, the case is reversed, and men provide a sacrifice for them. Properly, men sit down to the table on which bird and beast are set forth for food; here, however, men are placed upon the table, and bird and beast are the partakers. What a strange and pitiful reversal! But under the dominion of sin, what do we look for but anomalies and reversals? 1. Instead of man moving constantly *upward*, we find him moving steadily *downward*. 2. Instead of habit being the faithful and valuable *servant* of man, it becomes its tyrannous and unrelenting *master*. 3. Instead of asking how we can *serve* men at every turn and in every possible way, we ask how we can *use* them, how we can make them serve us. 4. Instead of *our seeking God* with the eagerness that will not be denied, we hold aloof or wander away, and he is *seeking us* with a patience that does not fail and that follows us through many rebellious years. 5. Instead of the felt nearness of God being a *heritage and a joy*, it becomes an *inconvenience* and an intrusion. 6. Instead of death being regarded as the *beginning* of the larger and better life, it is treated as the melancholy *end* of the life on earth. But Christ comes to revolutionize and reverse the anomalies and the reverses of sin; and thus to bring again the primeval blessedness. Happy they who learn of him and follow him, for they will be restored to the truth and the life which they have lost!—C.

Vers. 21—29.—*God his own Interpreter.* The final result of this great conflict between Gog and the people of Jehovah will prove to be that God's Name is hallowed as it never was before. There had been great misconstruction of his ways and mistake as to his purpose, but all should be made clear.

I. GOD MUCH MISUNDERSTOOD. How seriously and sadly God has been and is misunderstood is seen in the facts that (1) his very existence has been denied; (2) he has been mistaken for a blind, unintelligent Force, without any knowledge or character; (3) his unity has been disregarded, and his manifold activities referred to a plurality

of heavenly powers; (4) he has been believed to be occupied with himself and indifferent to the conduct and the character of his children; (5) he has been represented as partial, or as malevolent, or as unrelentingly and inconsiderately severe, or as simply good-natured without any concern for the righteousness of his rule and the moral integrity of his subjects, or as tied and bound by the laws which he has instituted, so as to be wholly unable to interpose in the affairs of men.

II. GOD IMPERFECTLY EXPLAINED. Many, indeed, have been the interpreters who have undertaken to "justify the ways of God to men;" and very unsatisfactory have their explanations been. They may have given a measure of comfort to a few and for a brief time. But as the world has moved on, and "the thoughts of men have widened," most of these solutions have gone their way, and given place to others which in their turn have been exploded and have disappeared.

III. GOD INTERPRETING HIMSELF. Cowper's line is true enough—

"God *is* his own Interpreter."

He does make plain that which was inexplicable and perplexing. Thus we find that (vers. 21—24) the heathen nations were in time made to see that the Jews were *not* taken captive by them because (as they once ignorantly supposed) Jehovah was unable to protect them, but because he was determined to punish them for their transgressions. And we find further (vers. 28, 29) that Israel at length understood that he who sent them into captivity and then brought them forth therefrom was in very deed and truth "the Lord their God," whom they should serve, and in whose service they would find security and peace. We find ourselves perplexed by many insoluble problems; serious difficulties respecting our own human life, and the dealings of our Divine Father with ourselves; more serious difficulty and perhaps distressing darkness as to God's government of the human world. We wonder why he permitted this and that; why he does not act when and how we should expect that he would; how he can be both just and kind when such and such things are as they are and as they ought not to be, etc. Let us: 1. Remember that in the light of the present we can understand much of the once-mysterious past. 2. Be assured that in the light of the future we shall perfectly understand that which is troubling and even burdening us now. God will interpret himself, as he has been doing all through the ages of human history. We shall see one day what we now believe, that "all his paths are mercy and truth."—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XL.

The magnificent temple-vision, as it is usually styled, a description of which forms the closing section of this book (ch. xl.—xlviii.), was the last extended "word" communicated to the prophet, and was given him in the five and twentieth year of the Captivity, *i.e.* about B.C. 575. Two years later he received a brief revelation concerning Egypt, which, in compiling his volume, he incorporated with the other prophecies relating to the same subject (ch. xxix. 17—21). Of the present oracle as a whole the significance will be best understood when its several parts have been examined in detail. Meanwhile it may suffice to note that it manifestly connects itself with the promise in ch. xxxvii. 27, 28, and forms an appropriate conclusion to the series of consolatory predictions which the prophet began to utter when tidings came to him that the city was smitten (ch. xxxiii. 22, 23). Having set forth the moral and spiritual conditions upon which alone restoration was possible for Israel (ch. xxxiii. 24—xxxiv.), announced the destruction of all Israel's ancient enemies, of whom Edom was the standing type (ch. xxxv.), foretold the dawning of a better day for Israel (ch. xxxvi.), when she should be resuscitated, reunited, and re-established in her old land, with Jehovah's sanctuary in its midst (ch. xxxvii.), and predicted the utter and final overthrow of all future combinations of hostile powers against her (ch. xxxviii., xxxix.), the prophet proceeds to develop the thought to which he has already alluded, that of Israel's re-establishment in Canaan, and to sketch an outline of the reorganized com-

munity or kingdom of God as that had been shown him in vision. His material he arranges in three main divisions, speaking first of a re-erected temple (ch. xl.—xliii.), next of a reorganized worship (ch. xliv.—xlvi.), and lastly of a redistributed territory (ch. xlvii., xlviii.). That Ezekiel, sorrowing over the first Israel's glories which had vanished with the fall of Jerusalem and the burning of her temple, and filled with eager anticipations of the golden era which was then beginning to loom up before him in ever fairer proportions and brighter colours,—that Ezekiel himself may have inwardly believed or hoped the picture he was then placing on his canvas would be ultimately realized upon the old soil, is by no means improbable; that the Holy Spirit, the real Author of the temple-vision, was draughting for the new Israel, soon to arise from the ashes of the old, a fresh religious and political constitution, which could not be satisfied with any merely local, temporal, and material realization, such as might be given to it in Palestine on the close of the exile, but reached out to something larger, broader, and more spiritual, even to the Israel of Messianic times, *i.e.* to the Church of God in Christian ages;—that the Holy Spirit had some such design is at least an idea which one might be pardoned for entertaining. (For the different views which have been held as to the proper interpretation of this vision, see note at the end of ch. xlviii.)

Vers. 1—4.—*The introduction to the vision.*

Ver. 1.—**In the five and twentieth year of our captivity**; *i.e.* in B.C. 575, assuming Jehoiakin's deportation to have taken place B.C. 600, *i.e.* in the fiftieth year of the prophet's age, in the twenty-fifth of his prophetic calling, and in the fourteenth after the fall of Jerusalem. As the last note of time was the twelfth year (ch. xxxii. 17), it may be assumed the interval was largely occupied in receiving and delivering the prophecies that fall between those dates, though it is more than likely a period of silence preceded the vision of which this last section of the book preserves an account. If not the last of the prophet's utterances (see ch. xxix. 17), it was beyond question the grandest and most momentous. Accordingly, the prophet notes with his customary exactness that the vision came to him **in the beginning of the year**, which Hitzig, whom Dr. Currey, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' follows, believes to have been a jubilee year, which began on the tenth day of the seventh month. As, however, the practice of commencing the year with this month was not introduced among the Jews till after the exile, and as Ezekiel everywhere follows the purely Mosaic arrangement of the year, the presumption is that the beginning of the year here alluded to was the month Abib, and that the tenth day of the month was the day on which the Torah enjoined the selection of a lamb for the Passover. Indeed, the two clauses in Ezekiel read like an abbreviation of the Mosaic statute (Exod. xii. 2, 3)—a circumstance sufficiently striking and probably significant, though emphasis should not, with Hengstenberg, be laid upon the fact that every word in Ezekiel's copy is found in the Exodus original. On that day, which was the anniversary of the beginning of a merciful deliverance to Israel in Egypt, of the initial step in a gracious process of transforming Pharaoh's captives into a nation,—on that day (for emphasis **the selfsame day**, as in ch. xxiv. 2), the prophet's soul was rapt into an ecstasy (see on ch. i. 3), in which he seemed to be transported **thither**, *i.e.* towards the smitten city, and a disclosure made to him concerning that new community which Jehovah was about to form out of old Israel.

Ver. 2.—**In the visions of God**; *i.e.* in the clairvoyant state which had been superinduced upon him by the hand of God, and in which he became conscious both of bodily sensations and mental perceptions transcending those that were possible to him in his natural condition. **Upon a very high mountain** (comp. Matt. iv. 8; Luke iv. 5). Schröder stands alone in taking אֶל as "beside" rather than "upon," other interpreters considering that אֶל has here the force of עַל, as in ch. xviii. 6, and ch. xxxi. 12. That this mountain, though resembling the temple hill in Jerusalem, was not that in reality, but "the mountain of the Lord's house" of Messianic times (see on ch. xliii. 12; and comp. ch. xvii. 22, 23; xx. 40; Isa. ii. 2; Micah iv. 6), may be inferred from its greater altitude than that of either Moriah or Zion, which pointed obviously to the loftier spiritual elevation of the new Jerusalem. **As the frame of a city on the south.** What Ezekiel beheld was not "beside" or "by" (Authorized Version), but "on" the mountain, and was not, as Hävernick, Ewald, and Kliefoth suppose, the new city of Jerusalem, though this might with a fair measure of accuracy be described as lying south of Moriah on which the temple stood, but the temple itself, which, with its walls and gates,

chambers and courts, rose majestically before the prophet's view, with all the magnificence, and indeed (as the particle בְּ indicates), with the external appearance of a city. That the prophet should speak of it as "on the south" receives sufficient explanation from the circumstance that he himself came from the north, and had it always before him in a southerly direction. The idea is correctly enough expressed by the ἀπέναντι of the LXX., which signifies "over against" to one coming from the north.

Ver. 3.—The word "thither" carries the thought back to ver. 1. When the prophet had been brought into the land of Israel, to the mountain and to the building, he perceived **a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass**, or, according to the LXX., "shining or polished brass," χαλκοῦ στίλβοντος, as in ch. i. 7—a description recalling those of the likeness of Jehovah in ch. i. 26, 27, of the angel who appeared to Daniel (x. 6), and of the glorified Christ (Rev. i. 15), and suggesting ideas of strength, beauty, and durability. In his hand he carried **a line of flax** and a **measuring-reed** (*kaneh hammidah*, or "reed of measuring," reed having been the customary material out of which such rods were made; compare the Assyrian for "a measuring-rod" *qanu*, the Greek κανών, and the Latin *canna*). Possibly he carried these as "emblems of building activity" (Hengstenberg), and because "he had many and different things to measure" (Kliefoth); but most likely the line was meant to measure large dimensions (comp. ch. xlvii. 3) and such as could not be taken by a straight stick, as *e.g.* the girth of pillars, and the rod to measure smaller dimensions, like those of the gates and walls of the temple. Hitzig's conjecture, that the line was linen because the place to be measured was the sanctuary, whose priests were obliged to clothe themselves in linen, Kliefoth rightly pronounces artificial and inaccurate, since the line was made, not of manufactured flax, or linen, but of the raw material. That the "man" was Jehovah or the Angel of the Presence (comp. ch. ix. 2) the analogy of Amos viii. 7, 8 and the statement of Ezekiel in ch. xliv. 2, 5 would seem to suggest; only it is not certain in the last of these passages that the speaker was "the man" and not rather "the God of Israel," who had already taken possession of the house (see ch. xliii. 2), and whose voice is once at least distinguished from that of the man (see ch. xliii. 6). Accordingly, Kliefoth, Smend, and others identify the "man" with the ordinary *angelus interpres* (cf. Rev. xxi. 9). The **gate** in which he stood "waiting for the new comer" was manifestly the north gate, since Ezekiel came from the north, though Hävernick and Smend put in a plea for the east gate, on the grounds that it was the principal entrance to the sanctuary, and the distance between it and the north gate, five hundred cubits, was too great to be passed over so slightly as in ver. 6.

Ver. 4.—The threefold summons addressed to the prophet (comp. ch. xliv. 5) intimated the importance of the communication about to be made, and reminded him of the necessity of giving it the closest attention in order to be able to impart it to the people (comp. ch. xliii. 10, 11).

Vers. 5—27.—The *outer court*, with its gates and chambers: (1) the enclosing wall (ver. 5); (2) the east gate (vers. 5—16); (3) the outer court (vers. 17—19); (4) the north gate (vers. 20—23); (5) the south gate (vers. 24—27).

Ver. 5.—*The enclosing wall.* **And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about.** The "house"—הַבַּיִת with the article—was the temple as the dwelling-place of Jehovah; only not the temple proper, but the whole complex structure. The "wall" belonged to the outer court; that of the inner court being afterwards mentioned (ch. xlii. 7). In having a "wall round about" Jehovah's sanctuary resembled both Greek and Babylonian shrines (see Herod., i. 18; 'Records of the Past,' vol. v. 126), but differed from both the tabernacle, which had none, and from the Solomonic temple, whose "wall" formed no essential part of the sacred structure, but was more or less of arbitrary erection on the part of Solomon and later kings. Here, however, the wall constituted an integral portion of the whole; and was designed, like that in ch. xlii. 20, "to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place," as the Greeks distinguished between the βέβηλον and the ἱερόν (see Thuoyd., iv. 95). Its breadth and height were the same (comp. Rev. xxi. 16)—one reed, of **six cubits by the cubit and an hand-breadth**; that is to say, each cubit measured an ordinary cubit and a hand-breadth (comp. ch. xliii. 13). Hengstenberg suggests that the greater cubit of Ezekiel was borrowed from the Chaldeans; and certainly Herodotus (i. 178) speaks of a royal cubit in Babylon which was three finger-breadths longer than the ordinary measure, while in Egypt also two such cubits of varying lengths were current (Böckhart, 'Metrol. Untersuch,' p. 212); "from which it might be supposed," says Smend, "that the same thing held good for Asia Minor." Still, the hypothesis is likelier that the cubit in question was the old Mosaic cubit—the cubit of a man (Deut. ii. 11), equal to the length of the forearm

from the elbow to the end of the longest finger—which was employed in the building of the Solomonic temple (2 Chron. iii. 3). Assuming the cubit to have been eighteen inches, the height and breadth of the wall would be nine feet—no great elevation, and presenting a striking contrast to the colossal proportions of city walls in Babylon and in Greece (see Herod., i. 170; 'Records of the Past,' vol. v. 127, 1st series), and even of the walls of the first temple in Jerusalem (see Josephus, 'Wars,' v. 1); but in this, perhaps, lay a special significance, since, as the city-like temple stood in no need of walls and bulwarks for defence, the lowness of its walls would permit it the more easily to be seen, would, in fact, make it a conspicuous object to all who might approach it for worship.

Ver. 6.—*The east gate.* **The gate which looketh toward the east**; literally, *whose face was toward the east.* That this was not the gate in which the angel had been first observed standing seems implied in the statement that he came to it. That he began with it is satisfactorily accounted for by remembering that the east gate was the principal entrance, and stood directly in front of the porch of the temple proper. The same reasons will explain the fulness of description accorded to it rather than to the others. **It was ascended by stairs**, or *steps*, of which the number *seven* is omitted, though it is mentioned in connection with the north (ver. 22) and south (ver. 26) gates. "The significance was obvious," writes Plumptre. "Men must ascend in heart and mind as they enter the sanctuary, and the seven steps represented the completeness at last of that ascension." The steps lay outside the wall, and at their head had a **threshold** (סַף, properly an "expansion," or "spreading out") **one reed broad**, *i.e.* measuring inwards from east to west, the thickness of the wall. Its extension from south to north, afterwards stated, was ten cubits, or fifteen feet (ver. 11). The last clause, improperly rendered, **and the other threshold** (Authorized and Revised Versions), or "the back threshold" (Ewald), *of the gate which was* **one reed**, should be translated, *even one threshold* (Revised Version margin), or *the first threshold*, as distinguished from the second, to be afterwards specified (ver. 7); comp. Gen. i. 5, "the first (one) day."

Ver. 7.—**And every little chamber.** Proceeding inward beneath a covered porch, the exact width of the gate and threshold, *i.e.* ten cubits, the prophet's guide, after having passed the threshold, conducted him to a series of *lodges*, רָאשִׁים, or "guard-chambers," six in number, three on each side (ver. 10), one reed or six cubits square, roofed (ver. 11), and separated from each other by a space of five cubits square, open overhead and closed towards the north or south as the case might be by a side wall. These "lodges," or "cells," were intended for the Levite sentinels who kept guard over the house (see ch. xliv. 11, 14; and comp. 1 Kings xiv. 28; 2 Chron. xii. 11). Beyond the cells stretched **the threshold of the gate by the porch** (Hebrew, אוּלָם; the LXX., αἰλάμ: Vulgate, *vestibulum*, "a portico") **of the gate within**; literally, *from the house*; i.e. the gate fronting one coming from the temple, hence the gate looking "towards the house." מִן־הַבַּיִת, "from the house," does not qualify the threshold as if to indicate that this was an interior threshold in contrast to the former, or exterior, but "the gate," its intention being to state that the porch in front of which extended the second "threshold" was the vestibule or portico before the gate which conducted inwards towards the temple, or on which one first stepped on his way from the temple.

Vers. 8, 9.—The divergent measurements of this porch, which are given in these verses, led the LXX. and the Vulgate to reject ver. 8 as spurious, and it is certainly wanting in some Hebrew manuscripts. Hitzig, Ewald, and Smend have accordingly expunged it from the text—an altogether unnecessary proceeding. The seeming discrepancy may be removed by supposing either, with Kliefoth, that ver. 8 furnishes the measurement of the porch from east to west, and ver. 9 its measurement from north to south, with the measurements in addition of the **posts** (אֵילִים, from אַיִל, "a ram," hence anything curved or twisted), *i.e.* pillars or jambs; or, with Keil, that ver. 8 states the depth from east to west, and ver. 9 the length from north to south. The "posts," which were sixty cubits high (ver. 14), were two cubits square at the base.

Ver. 10.—Having reached the furthest limit westward, the guide retraces his steps backward in an easterly direction, noting that on the side of the covered way opposite to that already examined the same arrangements existed as to "lodges" and "posts," the latter of which (אֵילִים) are here first mentioned in connection with the guard-rooms, and must be understood as signifying "pillars" or "jambs" in front of the walls. Their measurements, which were equal, were probably as in ver. 9, two cubits square.

Ver. 11.—**The breadth of the entry** (literally, *opening*) **of the gate, ten cubits.** Obviously this measurement was taken from north to south of the gate-entrance (ver. 6), and represented the whole breadth of the

doorway and the threshold, or one-fifth of the entire length of the gate-building. The second portion of the verse, **the length of the gate thirteen cubits**, is explained by Böttcher, Hitzig, Hävernick, Keil (with whom Plumptre agrees), as signifying the length of the covered way from the east entrance, since it is supposed the whole length of forty cubits (the length of the gate without the porch) would hardly be roofed in; so that assuming a similar covered way of thirteen cubits at the other end of the gate-building, as one came "from the house," there would be an open space, well, or uncovered courtyard, of fourteen cubits in length and six broad, enclosed on all sides by gate-buildings. The roofs extending from the east and west would be supported on the "posts" of the chambers mentioned in ver. 10. Smend, however, infers, from the windows in the posts within the gate (ver. 16), that the whole extent was roofed in, and accordingly can offer no explanation of the clause; Kliefoth and Schröder prefer to regard the thirteen cubits as the height of the gate, although the word translated "length" never elsewhere has this meaning.

Ver. 12.—**The space also before the little chambers**; more correctly, *and a border before the lodges*. Though the construction of this border, fence, or barrier (comp. ch. xxvii. 4; xliii. 13, 17; Exod. xix. 12) is not described, its design most likely was to enable the guardsman, by stepping beyond his cell, to observe what was going on in the gate without either interrupting or being interrupted by the passengers. As the barrier projected one cubit on each side of the ten-cubit way, only eight cubits remained for persons going in or out.

Ver. 13.—**The breadth** of the gate from the roof of one little chamber or lodge to another, measuring from door to door, was **five and twenty cubits**, which were thus made up: 10 cubits of footway + 12 (2 × 6) cubits for the two guard-rooms + 3 (2 × say 1½) cubits for the thickness of the two side walls = 25 cubits in all. According to ver. 42, the length of a hewn stone was one cubit and a half. The doors from which the measurements were taken must have been in the side walls at the back of the guard-rooms.

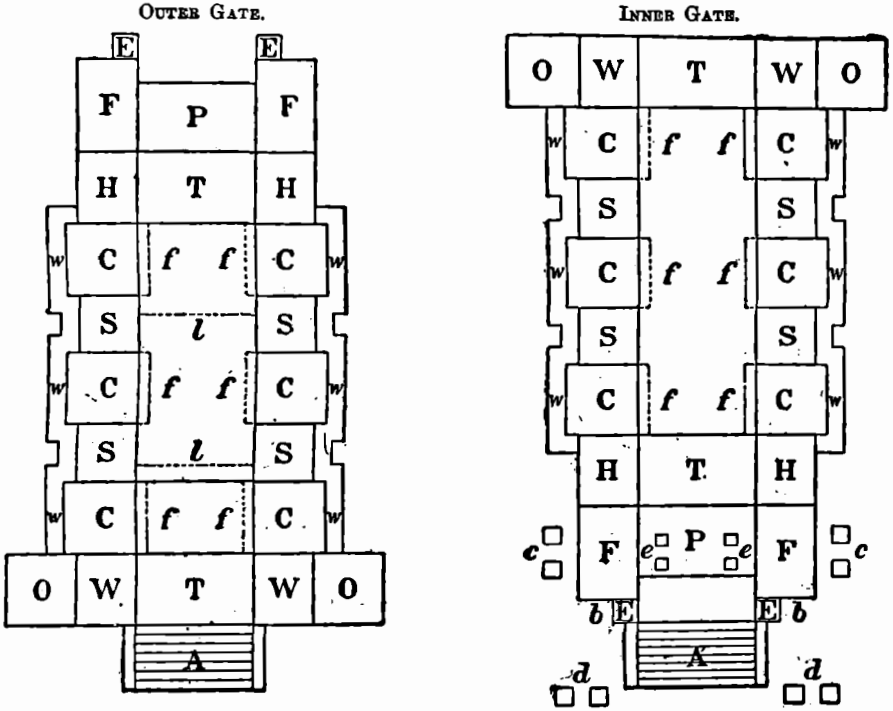
Ver. 14.—**He made also posts.** In using the verb "made" the prophet either went back in thought to the time when the man who then explained the building had fashioned it (Hengstenberg); or he employed the term in the sense of *constituit*, i.e. fixed or estimated, "inasmuch as such a height could not be measured from the bottom to the top with the measuring-rod" (Keil). The "posts," the אֵילִם of ver. 9, were sixty cubits high, and corresponded to the towers in modern churches. To the objection sometimes urged against what is called the "exaggerated" height of these columns, Kliefoth replies, "If it had been considered that our church towers have grown up out of gate-pillars, that one can see, not merely in Egyptian obelisks and Turkish minarets, but also in our own hollow factory chimneys, how upon a base of two cubits, square pillars of sixty cubits high can be erected, and that finally the talk is of a colossal building seen in vision, no critical difficulties would have been discovered in this statement as to height." The last clause, **even unto the post of the court round about the gate**, should read, *and the court* reached *unto the post* (אֵיל being used collectively), *the gate* being *round about* (Revised Version); or, *the court round about the gate* reached *to the pillars* (Keil); or, *at the pillar the court* was *round about the gate* (Kliefoth). The sense is, that the court lay round about the inner egress from the gate. The Authorized Version, with which Dr. Currey, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' agrees, thinks of an inner hall between the porch of the gate and the two most western guard-chambers, round the sides of which the sixty-cubit columns stood. Ewald, following the corrupt text of the LXX., translates, "And the threshold of the outer vestibule twenty cubits, the gate court abutting on the chambers round about."

Ver. 15.—The whole length of the gate, from the outer entrance to the inner exit, **fifty cubits**, was thus composed—

1. An outer threshold	6	cubits
2. Three guard-chambers, six cubits each	18	,,
3. Two spaces between the chambers, five cubits each ...	10	,,
4. An inner threshold	6	,,
5. A porch before the gate ...	8	,,
6. One post, or pillar	2	,,
Total ...	50	,,

Ver. 16.—**And there were narrow** (Hebrew, *closed*) **windows**, probably of lattice-work, so fixed as to prevent either egress or ingress. That these "windows" (חַלֹּנוֹת, so called from being perforated) were intended to impart light to the gateway, either in whole or in part, is apparent, though it is difficult to form a clear idea of how they were situated. They were in the chambers, and in their posts and in the arches, or *colonnades* (Revised Version margin). In the chambers, or "lodges," they were most likely in the back walls, and in or near the posts, or pillars, belonging to the doors of these chambers, the clause, "and in their posts," being re-

garded as epexegetic of the preceding, and designed to furnish a more precise explanation of the particular part of the guard-room in which the windows were. Similar windows existed in the Solomonic temple (1 Kings vi 4). The "arches," or "colonnades" (אֻלָּמוֹת), were probably wall-projections on the sides of the chambers, so that light was admitted from three sides. Thus to one standing within, the whole gateway appeared studded round and round with windows. The description of the gate closes with the statement that upon each post were palm trees, which may signify either that the shaft was fashioned like a palm tree, as is sometimes seen in ancient buildings in the East (Dr. Currey, Plumptre) or that it was ornamented with representa-



A, stair of seven steps; T, threshold of 6 × 10 cubits; C, chambers of 6 cubits square; S, spaces between the chambers; P, porch of gate, 6 × 5 cubits; O, outer wall, 6 × 6 cubits; W, wall of gate, 6 × 5 cubits; *w*, *w*, thickness of chamber wall, 1½ cubit; *f*, *f*, barriers or fence before chambers, 6 × 1 cubits; *l*, *l*, lines to which covering of way reached; E, gate pillars, 2 cubits square and 60 cubits high; H, F, walls of threshold and porch, 14 × 5 cubits; *b*, *b*, chambers for washing; *c*, *c*, tables for slaughtering; *d*, *d*, table for knives, etc.; *e*, *e*, tables for laying flesh; A′, stair of eight steps.

tions of palm branches or palm trees (Keil, Ewald, Kliefoth). Hengstenberg's idea, that "whole palms beside the pillars are meant," is favoured by Smend, who cites, in addition to ver. 26, ch. xli. 18, etc., and 1 Kings vi. 29; vii. 36.

Vers. 17—19.—*The outer court.* Emerging from the doorway inwards, the prophet, accompanied by his celestial guide, stepped into the outward court, *i.e.* the area surrounding the temple buildings. There the first thing observed was that chambers and a pavement ran round the court. The chambers were cells, or rooms — לְשָׁכוֹת always signifying single rooms in a building (see ch. xlii. 1; 1 Chron. ix. 26)—whose dimensions, exact sites, and uses are not specified, though, as they were thirty in

number, it is probable they were arranged on the east, north, and south sides of the court, five upon each side of the gate, and standing somewhat apart from each other; that they were large enough to contain as many as thirty persons (see 1 Sam. ix. 22; and comp. Jer. xxxv. 2); and that they were designed for sacrificial meals and such-like purposes (see ch. xliv. 1, etc.). In pre-exilic times such halls had been occupied by distinguished persons connected with the temple service (see ch. viii. 8—12; 2 Kings xxiii. 11; Jer. xxxv. 4, etc.; xxxvi. 10; Ezra x. 6). The pavement was a tesselated floor (comp. Esth. i. 6; 2 Chron. vii. 3), which ran round the court and was named **the lower pavement**, to distinguish it from that laid in the inner court which stood at a higher elevation than the outer. As another note of position, it is stated to have been **by the side** (literally, *shoulder*) **of the gates over against** —or, *answerable to* (Revised Version)—**the length of the gates.** This can only mean that the breadth of the pavement was fifty cubits (the length of the gates, ver. 15) less six cubits (the thickness of the wall, ver. 5), or forty-four cubits, and that it ran along the inner length of the wall on either side of the gates. The breadth of the court **from the forefront of the lower gate,** *i.e.* from the inner end of the east gate or the edge of the pavement, **unto the forefront of the inner court without** was **an hundred cubits.** Whether the measurement was up to the wall of the inner court, within which, on this hypothesis, its gate must have wholly lain, or only up to the door of the inner court, which, on this understanding, must have projected beyond its wall, is obscure. The first interpretation derives support from the circumstance that the *terminus ad quem* of the measurement is said to have been, not the inner gate, but the inner court; while the second finds countenance in the use of the preposition מְחוּץ, which seems to indicate that the measuring proceeded from the western extremity of the outer gate to the eastern extremity of the inner gate, and appears to be confirmed by vers. 23 and 27, as well as by the consideration that in this way the symmetry of the building would be better preserved than by making the outer gate project into the court and the inner gate lie wholly within the inner wall. In this way the hundred cubits marked the distance between the extremities of the gates, the whole breadth of the court being two hundred cubits, *i.e.* a hundred cubits between the gates, with two gates' lengths of fifty cubits each added. The same measurements applied to the north gate, which the seer next approached.

Vers. 20—23.—*The north gate.* This was **in all respects similar to that upon the east,** though its description proceeds in the reverse order, beginning with the three "chambers," or lodges, on each side of the footway (ver. 21), going on to the "posts," "arches," and "windows," and ending with the outside steps, seven in number (ver. 22), which are here first mentioned in connection with the gates. Its dimensions were the same as those of the "first" gate, fifty cubits long and twenty-five cubits broad. It stood exactly in front of a corresponding gate into the inner court, and the distance between the two gates was, as before, a hundred cubits.

Vers. 24—27.—*The south gate.* Here again the same details recur as to the structure of the gate, its dimensions, and distance from the gate which led into the inner court.

Vers. 28—47.—*The inner court,* with its gates, chambers and slaughtering-tables: (1) the south gate (vers. 28—31); (2) the east gate (vers. 32—34); (3) the north gate (vers. 35—37); (4) the arrangements for sacrifice (vers. 38—43); and (5) the chambers for the officiating priests (vers. 44—47).

Vers. 28—31.—*The south gate of the inner court.* The construction and measurements of this corresponded with those of the gates in the outer court, with only two points of difference, viz. that it possessed a flight of **eight steps** instead of seven, and that **the arches,** or wall-projections, were **toward the outer court.** The difference in the number of the steps was doubtless of symbolic significance, and pointed not only to the higher sanctity in general which attached to the inner court, but to the truth that, as one approached the dwelling-place of Jehovah, an increasing measure and degree of holiness were demanded—what Plumptre styles "an ever-ascending *sursum corda.*" The seven steps of the outer door added to the eight steps of this amount to fifteen, with which corresponds the number of the pilgrim-psalms (Ps. cxx.—cxxxiv.), which are supposed to have been sung, one upon each step, by the choir of Levites as they ascended first into the outer and then into the inner court. The statement that the wall-projections were towards the outer court showed that, in walking through the inner gateway, one would reverse the order of the outer gate, *i.e.* would first pass through the porch, then cross the threshold to the guard-rooms, next step upon the second threshold, and finally enter the inner court.

Vers. 32—34.—*The east gate of the inner court.* The same resemblance to the outer gates are noted in connection with this doorway, and the same two points of distinction just commented on.

Vers. 35—37.—*The north gate of the inner court.* The same minute specification of the guard-rooms, the pillars, wall-projections, windows, steps, is again repeated, as if to show that all parts in this divinely fashioned edifice were of equal moment.

Vers. 38—43.—*The arrangements for sacrifice.* Three things demand attention—the cells for washing, the tables for slaughtering, and the hooks.

Ver. 38.—**The chambers.** As the verse explains, these were different from the guard-rooms in the gates (vers. 7, 21) and the chambers on the pavement (ver. 17), although the same Hebrew word is employed to designate the latter. The cells under consideration were expressly designed for washing "the inwards and the legs" of the victims brought for sacrifice (Lev. i. 9). Whether such a cell stood at each of the three gates, as the plural seems to indicate, although described only in connection with the north (Keil, Kliefoth, Plumptre), or merely at one gate, and that the north—because, according to the Law (Lev. i. 11; vi. 18; vii. 2), on the north side of the altar burnt, sin, and trespass offerings were to be killed (Hävernick, Hengstenberg)—or the east, which is alluded to in vers. 39, 40 (Hitzig, Ewald, Smend), is controverted, though the former view seems the preferable, seeing that, according to ch. xlvi. 1, 2, the priests were to prepare burnt offerings and peace offerings for the prince at the posts of the east gate. The situation of the cells is stated to have been by (or, *beside*) the posts of (*i.e.* at) the gates (see on ver. 14), but on which side of the gates, whether near the right or left pillar, no information is furnished. Keil and Kliefoth place those at the south and north gates on the west side; that at the east gate Keil locates on its north side, Kliefoth placing one in the side wall at each side of the gate.

Vers. 39—42.—**The tables.** These were twelve in number, of which eight were used for slaughtering purposes, *i.e.* either for slaying the sacrifices or for laying upon them the carcases of the slaughtered victims; and the remaining four for depositing thereon the instruments employed in killing the animals. Of the eight, four stood within the porch of the gate, two on each side, and four without—two on the side as one goeth up to the entry of the north gate; rather, *at the shoulder to one going up to the gate opening towards the north*, i.e. on the outside of the porch north wall; and two on the other side or shoulder, *i.e.* on the outside of the porch south wall. This determines the gate in question to have been, not the north gate, as the Authorized Version has conjectured, but the east gate, whose side walls looked towards the north and south. The third quaternion of tables appears to have been planted at the steps, presumably two on each side, *i.e.* if with Kliefoth, Keil, and Schröder, לְעוֹלָה be translated "at the ascent," or "going up," *i.e.* at the staircase (comp. ver. 26). If, however, with the Authorized and Revised Versions, Ewald, Hengstenberg, Smend, and others, לְעוֹלָה be read "for the burnt offering," then the exact position of the tables is left undetermined, though in any case they must have been near the slaughtering-tables. As they were designed for heavy instruments, they were constructed of hewn stones a cubit and a half long, a cubit and a half broad, and one cubit high; from which it may be argued the eight previously mentioned were made of wood.

Ver. 43.—**The hooks.** The word שְׂפָתַיִם occurs again only in Ps. lxviii. 13, where it signifies "sheepfolds," or "stalls;" its older form (מִשְׂפְּתַיִם) appearing in Gen. xlix. 14 and Judg. v. 16. As this sense is unsuitable, recourse must be had to its derivation (from שָׂפָה, "to put, set, or fix"), which suggests as its import here either, as Ewald, Kliefoth, Hengstenberg, Hävernick, and Smend, following the LXX. and Vulgate, prefer, "ledges," or "border guards," on the edge of the tables, to keep the instruments or flesh from falling off; or, as Kimchi, Gesenius, Fürst, Keil, Schröder, and Plumptre, after the Chaldean paraphrast, explain, "pegs" fastened in the wall for hanging the slaughtered carcases before they were flayed. In favour of the first meaning stand the facts that the second clause of this verse speaks of "tables," not of "walls," and that the measure of the *shephataim* is one of breadth rather than of length; against it are the considerations that the dual form, *shephataim*, fits better to a forked peg than to a double border, and that the *shephataim* are stated to have been fastened "in the house" (*ba-baith*), which again suits the idea of a peg fastened in the outer wall of the porch, rather than of a border fixed upon a table. The last clause of this verse is rendered by Ewald, after the LXX., "and over the tables" (obviously those standing outside of the porch) "were covers to protect them from rain and from drought;" and it is conceivable that coverings might have been advantageous for both the wooden tables and the officiating priests; only the Hebrew must be changed before it can yield this rendering.

Vers. 44—46.—*The chambers of the singers.* According to ver. 44, these, of which the number is not recorded, were situated in the inner court, outside of the inner gate, at

the side of the north gate, and looked towards the south, one only being located at the side of the east gate with a prospect towards the north. Interpreted in this way, they cannot have been the same as the "priests' chambers" mentioned in vers. 45, 46, though these also looked in the same direction. The language, however, seems to indicate that they were the same, and on this hypothesis it is difficult to understand how they should be called "the chambers of the singers," and at the same time be assigned to the priests, "the keepers of the charge of the house" and "the keepers of the charge of the altar." Hengstenberg, Kliefoth, Schröder, and others hold that Ezekiel purposed to suggest that in the vision-temple before him the choral service was no longer to be left exclusively in the hands of the Levites as it had been in the Solomonic temple (1 Chron. vi. 33—47; xv. 17; 2 Chron. xx. 19), but that the priests were to participate therein. Dr. Currey imagines the chambers may have been occupied in common by the singers and the priests when engaged on duty at the temple. The LXX. text reads, "And he led me unto the inner court, and behold two chambers in the inner court, one at the back of the gate which looks towards the north, and bearing towards the south, and one at the back of the gate which looks towards the south, and bearing towards the north;" and in accordance with this Rosenmüller, Hitzig, Ewald, Keil, and Smend propose sundry emendations on the Hebrew text. Since, however, it cannot be certified that the LXX. did not paraphrase or mistranslate the present rather than follow a different text, it is safer to abide by the renderings of the Authorized and Revised Versions. Yet one cannot help feeling that the LXX. translation has the merit of clearness and simplicity.

Ver. 45.—**The priests, the keepers of the charge of the house.** Under the Law the Levite families of Gershon, Kohath, and Merari had the charge of the tabernacle and all its belongings (Numb. iii. 25, etc.); but of these Levites who kept the charge of the sanctuary, Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest had the oversight. Hence the priests alluded to by Ezekiel as the keepers of the charge of the house were most likely those who superintended the Levites in the execution of their tasks.

Ver. 46.—**The keepers of the charge of the altar.** These formed another body of priests, whose duties generally were to officiate in the temple-worship, and more specifically to sacrifice and burn incense upon the altars (Lev. i.—vi.). Under the Law the priests were all descendants of Aaron (Exod. xxvii. 20, 21; xxviii. 1—4; xxix. 9, 44; xl. 15). By David these were divided into two classes—the sons of Eleazar, at the head of whom stood Zadok; and the sons of Ithamar, with Ahimelech as their chief (1 Chron. xxiv. 3). In the vision-temple the **sons of Zadok among the sons of Levi** have the sole right of drawing near to the Lord to minister unto him (see on ch. xliii. 15).

Ver. 47.—**He measured the court . . . and the altar.** The dimensions of the former, the open space in front of the temple, alone are given—a hundred cubits long and a hundred cubits broad; those of the latter, which stood before the "house," and occupied the centre of the square, are afterwards recorded (ch. xliii. 13). The distance from north to south of the inner court being a hundred cubits, if to these be added twice two hundred cubits, the space between the outer court wall and that of the inner court, the result will give five hundred cubits as the breadth of the outer court, from north gate to south gate. Then as the length of the inner court was a hundred cubits, if to these be added first the hundred cubits lying before the inner court towards the east, secondly, the hundred cubits covered by the temple (ch. xli. 13, 14), and thirdly, the one hundred cubits which extended behind the temple (ch. xli. 13, 14), the total will amount to five hundred cubits for the length of the outer court from east to west. The outer court, therefore, like the inner, was a square.

Vers. 48, 49.—With these verses the following chapter ought to have commenced, as the seer now advances to a description of *the house*, or temple proper, as in 1 Kings vi. 2, with its three parts—a porch (vers. 48, 49), a holy place (ch. xli. 1), and a holy of holies (ch. xli. 4).

Ver. 48.—**The porch**, or vestibule, according to Keil, appears to have been entered by a folding door of two leaves, each three cubits broad, which were attached to two side pillars five cubits broad, and met in the middle, so that the whole breadth of the porch front was six cubits, or, including the posts, sixteen cubits. The measurements in ver. 49 of the length of the porch (from east to west) twenty cubits, and the breadth (from north to south) eleven cubits, he harmonizes with this view by assuming that the pillars, which were five cubits broad in

front, were only half that breadth in the inside, the side wall dividing it in two, so that, although to one entering the opening was only six cubits, the moment one stood in the interior it was 6 cubits + 2 × 2½ cubits = 11 cubits. Kliefoth, however, rejects this explanation, and understands the three cubits to refer to the portion of the entrance on either side which was closed by a gate, perhaps of lattice-work, leaving for the ingress and egress of priests a passage of five cubits. In this view the whole front of the porch would be 5 cubits of passage + 6 (2 × 3) cubits of lattice-work + 10 (2 × 5) cubits of pillar, equal in all to 21 cubits. Dr. Currey, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' includes the three cubits of door in the five cubits of post, and, supposing the temple entrance to be ten cubits, makes the whole front to have been twenty cubits. We prefer Kliefoth's opinion.

Ver. 49.—Like the gates into the courts, the temple porch was entered by steps, of which the number is not stated, though, after the LXX., it is usually assumed to have been ten, Hengstenberg suggesting fourteen. The last particular noted, that there were pillars by the posts, has been explained to signify that upon the posts, or bases, stood shafts or pillars (Currey), or with more probability that by or near the pillars rose columns (Keil, Kliefoth). The height of these is not given, though Hengstenberg again finds it in the elevation of the porch of Solomon's temple—a hundred and twenty cubits (2 Chron. iii. 4). Their exact position is not stated; but they were probably, like Jachin and Boaz in the Solomonic temple, stationed one on each side of the steps.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 2.—*The exalted city.* Ezekiel now comes to an elaborate vision of the restored condition of the Jews—first that of their city, and then that of the temple which is its crowning glory. Being well acquainted with his native land, which he could never forget in the weary days by the waters of Babylon, he was able to picture its scenes when inspired with prophetic sight. He sees the city of the future, "upon a very high mountain." As the Swiss pines for his mountain home when banished to some dreary flat land, the Jewish highlander turns in thought from the low river-banks of Mesopotamia to the longed-for heights of his native Judæa. It is a happy thing for him to dream of a city crowning a mountain height. Jerusalem is a mountain-city, standing some two thousand feet above the level of the Mediterranean. Viewed from the wilderness, which, indeed, sinks down another eighteen hundred feet to the Dead Sea, its domes and minarets seem to float in the air like the habitations of a city in cloudland. The visionary Jerusalem appears to the wrapt seer as an even more exalted city.

I. THE CITY OF GOD. Ezekiel conceives his vision of the great future under the image of a splendid city. St. John beheld the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, as the type of the glorious Church of God, or of human society Christianized. The Greeks conceived their ideal of perfected human life after the model of a pattern city. Undoubtedly, writing as he was to the captives of Babylon, Ezekiel intended to direct attention to the earthly Jerusalem, which, after being destroyed, was to be rebuilt. Thus only could his language be understood by his contemporaries. But the definite, material prediction embodies and exemplifies ideas that may be applied to the spiritual restoration of man, illustrated by this city prospect. 1. *There is to be a blessed life on earth.* The mountain-city is terrestrial. The Apocalyptic new Jerusalem is let down from heaven. The city of God is set up here in the Christian Church, as St. Augustine showed. But alas! it is as yet but a poor realization of the grand prophetic dream. A few shanties mark the site of the glorious city of the future. That city is yet to be. 2. *This blessed life will be social.* Perhaps the ancient and the Eastern prized the city—well-walled and safe-guarded—more than we do in the crowded West, with our modern love of the country. But the essential thought here is that the perfect state is social. In the perfect city order is supreme through universal love—a strange contrast to our miserable cities of sin and selfishness. It is the best that, being corrupted, becomes the worst.

II. ITS EXALTED POSITION. 1. *It is in the land of Israel.* Men must enter the Holy Land to reach the Holy City. Its citizens were Jews—as indeed most of the inhabitants of Jerusalem are at the present day. We must be the true people of God, *i.e.* true followers of Christ, if we would enjoy the privileges of the glorious future.

2. *It is "set upon a very high mountain."* The exaltation of the city suggests many advantages. (1) Its glory. It is exalted in favour—crowning a height. (2) Its strength. Cities were set aloft that nature might fortify them. Jerusalem is a natural fortress. The city of God is safe. (3) Its salubrity. High lands are bracing. The Christian life braces the soul in spiritual health. (4) Its nearness to heaven. Nothing overshadows the exalted city. The people of God are lifted into direct relations with heaven. (5) Its conspicuousness. "A city that is set upon a hill cannot be hid" (Matt. v. 14). The Church is to bear witness to the world. The best gospel is that of lofty Christian living.

Ver. 3.—*The man with the measuring-reed.* We shall lose ourselves in a jungle of fancies if we attempt to see mystical allusions in the various measurements of Ezekiel's prophetic city. What we may call *Pythagorean* theology, the exegesis that runs riot among the numbers and dates of prophecy, has done much to suggest doubt as to the plain, direct use of the Bible. We have no evidence that the measurements of the exalted city contain any spiritual symbolism. Neither, as Hengstenberg has wisely pointed out, are the proportions of the city so colossal as to suggest an unheard-of splendour of size. The new Jerusalem is much smaller than Babylon; it would be but an insignificant suburb if it were joined on to our huge London. But mere bigness is no commendation for a city. Athens and Jerusalem were far smaller than Nineveh and Babylon; yet they took a far more important place in the history of man. Why, then, does Ezekiel call attention to the man with the measuring-reed? and why does he give the exact details of the plan of the city and temple? However we may shun mysticism in favour of prosaic literalism, we must not forget that Ezekiel was a prophet, not an architect. Why, then, does he fill his pages with these architectural details? Ezekiel must mean to suggest certain characteristics of the happy future.

I. REALITY. Ezekiel here comes down to concrete facts. There is nothing that so impresses men with a sense of reality as a vivid presentation of details. Much religious teaching is unimpressive because it is too general and abstract. Christ's teaching was very concrete; he dwelt on illustrative specimens, rather than on general principles. Therefore "the common people heard him gladly." Reality marked off the teaching of Christ from the dry discussions of rabbinical lore. A significant rebuke of much religious teaching is unconsciously conveyed by the remark of the rustic who, on hearing that some one had been to Jerusalem, exclaimed with amazement, "I thought Jerusalem was only a Bible town!"

II. DEFINITENESS. The new Jerusalem is to be no city of cloudland, its golden streets and rosy domes passing one into another and melting while we gaze at it. Here we have sharp outlines as well as solid substances. Many people sadly need a man with the measuring-reed to define their religious notions. We are suffering from a violent reaction against the old exactness of theological definition, according to which heavenly things were most minutely mapped out without a shadow of doubt. We now greatly lack precision of thought. Men's ideas are generally hazy. They want outline.

III. ORDER. The several parts being measured off will stand in their allotted places. The private house will not trepass on the line of the street, nor will one builder interfere with the foundations of another. There is order in the kingdom of religion. We need it (1) in thought, that our ideas may be rightly arranged; (2) in work, that we may not clash with one another; (3) in the social element of religion, that each may take his place. The Church is not a mob.

IV. DIVINE DIRECTION. Ezekiel wrote as a prophet, as a messenger of God. Moses was to make the tabernacle after the pattern shown to him in the mount (Exod. xxv. 40). God cares for the smallest details of his people's life and work. We should seek for his guidance in these matters.

Ver. 6.—"*The gate which looketh toward the east.*" Let us clearly understand that this is only a prosaic description of part of Jerusalem as the prophet conceives it in his vision of the city rebuilt. We cannot fairly see in these words any profound mystical allusions. But we may use them as illustrations of other things, as we may take nature in illustration of religion without believing that our parables are founded on fixed, objective, Swedenbörgen-like correspondences. Let us, then, follow the fancy

which the picture of a gate looking towards the east may call up when we take it as an illustration of what may be similar in other regions of life.

I. AN ORIENTAL OUTLOOK. The new city of God has this outlook—she has a gate which looketh towards the East. We must never forget that our religion comes from the East. In form it is Oriental still. 1. We need to remember this fact when we are in danger of interpreting its glowing metaphors in the cold matter-of-fact style of the West. 2. It might quiet the pride of Europe for men to remember that they owe what is best in European civilization to an Asiatic stock. 3. The wonder is that the unprogressive East produced the most progressive religion. The world-religion of Christ sprang from Asia. This very fact testifies to its Divine origin. 4. It shows, however, that Orientals especially should receive the gospel.

II. AN OUTLOOK TOWARDS THE LIGHT. The light dawns in the East. We all need light, and should love, seek, and cherish it. We are too satisfied with our dim, human, artificial light, instead of looking for that Light of the world, which is indeed the Light of the ages. The true Christian will be ever looking towards Christ, his Sun.

III. AN OUTLOOK TOWARDS THE NEW DAY. Each day begins in the east. We shall miss the sunrise if we set our faces towards the west. Some natures always incline to turn with a melancholy gaze towards the waning light of setting suns. They deplore the good old times; they weep over the days that have been, but can never be again; they weary their souls with incessant regrets. This continuous dreaming on the past is unwholesome; it tends to paralyze our energies and leave us in neglect of the duties as well as the hopes of the future. They are wiser who, like St. Paul, forget the things that are behind, and reach forth unto those which are before (Phil. iii. 13). God has a new day of light and service for the saddest, most wearied soul that will turn to his grace. Wise men live in the future; they look to the rising sun.

IV. AN OUTLOOK TOWARDS CHRIST. The first sight which many a visitor to Palestine craves to set eyes on is the Mount of Olives; his most earnest desire is to climb the very hill that Jesus Christ often trod. Of all sacred spots about Jerusalem this must be most like its original self. Now the eastern gate looks right on the Mount of Olives. To the Christian its prospect is profoundly interesting. Yet Christ has arisen. He is not there. What we now look for is an eastern gate of the soul turned to that ever-living Christ who ascended from the Mount of Olives—

> "Faith has yet her Olivet,
> And Love her Galilee."

Ver. 39.—*Sacrifices in the new temple.* As we read the dry details of the city that is to be rebuilt and its new temple, we are suddenly pulled up by a startling item. Among the various arrangements of the ancient temple that are to be revived, provision is made for the sacrificial rites. There are to be sacrifices in the new temple. The burnt offering and the sin offering and the trespass offering are all to be there. Then sacrifices will be needed after the restoration. It might have been supposed that these would now be dispensed with, since sin was put away and the people were re-dedicated to God. But as a matter of fact, the temple ritual was never before cultivated with such assiduity and elaborateness.

I. WE NEED REPEATED REDEDICATION OF OUR LIVES TO GOD. The burnt offering signified the self-dedication of the man who presented it. It was given whole, to show that he had surrendered his all to God; it was consumed by fire, to suggest that he was to make this surrender complete in depth, intensity, and reality, as well as in comprehensiveness. Now, to have made this offering once for all did not suffice. It had to be continually renewed. The dedication of Israel to God in the restoration to their land could not be accepted as sufficient if it were done once for all. It had to be made over and over again. So is it with the Christian's offering of himself. When thinking of his great, decisive step, he may exclaim, in Doddridge's well-known words—

> "'Tis done, the great transaction's done:
> I am my Lord's, and he is mine."

Yet if he rests satisfied with having once taken that step, he will soon find himself slipping back from his high resolve. We must continually renew our self-dedication to Christ. The sacrament of baptism, which signifies the first dedication, is taken but

once; but it is followed by that of the Lord's Supper, which suggests renewal of dedication in deliberate intention, as when the Roman soldier took the oath of allegiance to his general. This sacrament we repeat many times.

II. WE NEED REPEATED CLEANSING FROM SIN. There were to be sin and trespass offerings in the new temple. This fact is startling and most painful. Even while the people are returning, penitent and restored, provision has to be made for future falls and sins. 1. *Christian people sin.* We know that this is only too true of all Christian people. There is no sinless soul on earth. "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8). The foresight of the fact is no excuse for us; for God does not make his children sin—he endeavours to save them from it. Thus Christ predicted Peter's fall although he had prayed that his disciple might be kept faithful (Luke xxii. 31, 32). 2. *God has provided for the recovery of Christians when they sin.* There were to be sacrifices in the restored temple. This arrangement shows the wonderful long-suffering mercy of God. The same mercy is displayed towards Christians. It is a shame that they who have once washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb should again stain them with the ruin of sin. Yet as this *is* done, God provides even again for cleansing—not now by repeated sacrifices, but by the eternal efficacy of the one perfect Sacrifice. "And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: and he is the Propitiation for our sins" (1 John ii. 2, 3).

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 3.—*Measurement.* It strikes the reader of this prophetic book as strange that several chapters towards its close should be chiefly occupied with measurements of the temple which Ezekiel saw in his vision. The reed and the line seem at first sight to have little to do with a prophetic vision. Especially does this seem the case when it is perceived to how large an extent these measurements are a repetition of those found in earlier books of the Scriptures. But reflection will show us that measurements such as are here described may suggest thoughts very helpful to the devout, religious mind.

I. MEASUREMENTS ARE NECESSARY IN ORDER TO THE EXPLANATION OF PROPORTION, ORDER, AND BEAUTY. It is well known to students of science that mathematical relations are found to exist where an ordinary observer would little expect to find them. When they come to ask whether explanation can be given of such differences as those which obtain between different colours and different sounds, they are led to investigations which show that regular variations in the number of vibrations in a second, whether of the ether or of the atmosphere, account for the differences in question. When they come to ask why the heavenly bodies fulfil their regular movements and preserve their beautiful harmony, they are led to investigations which issue in the discovery that mathematical laws govern—as the phrase is—the movements which excite our wonder and admiration. These are but familiar illustrations of a principle which is recognized throughout the material universe. If we may use such language with reverence, we may say that the cosmos is evidently the work of a great Mathematician, Measurer, and Mechanic. When we turn from the works of nature to works of art, we are confronted by the same principle. If a building, whether a temple or a palace, be erected, it is constructed upon principles which involve numerical relations and measurements. The sculptor measures his proportions in trunk and head and limb; the poet measures the feet in his verse. Wherever we find order and beauty, we have but to look below the surface, and we shall discover numbers and measurements.

II. MEASUREMENTS ARE EVIDENCES OF MIND. There are different grades of intelligence, and this is nowhere more obvious than in the varying degrees in which human workmanship is regulated by mathematical principles. The rudest wigwam is a proof of design and of adaptation, of the possession by the builder of some powers of space-measurement. But a complicated machine, such as a watch or a steam-engine, bears unmistakable evidence of mathematical as well as of manipulative ability. If a temple be constructed, of vast size, of harmonious proportions, of symmetry, containing many parts all bound into an organic unity, it speaks to every beholder of

a mind—a mind capable and cultured, a mind patient and comprehensive. To those who believe in the existence of God, the material universe is full of evidences of his unequalled and supreme intellect; the measurements of the scientific observer are sufficient to establish this conviction. The universe is God's temple, and all its lines are laid down, all its parts are co-ordinated, in such a manner as to evince what, in human language, we may term measurements the most complete and the most exact. To the deeply reflecting mind, the existence of the spiritual temple is even more eloquent concerning the attributes and especially the comprehensive and foreseeing wisdom of the Eternal.

III. MATERIAL MEASUREMENTS ARE PROPERLY SYMBOLICAL OF THE SPIRITUAL. A reflecting reader of these chapters will hardly rest in any conclusions regarding a structure of stone, of timber, of precious metal. Whatever may be his canon of interpretation, whether he adopts the literal or the figurative principle, whether or not he looks for a material temple still to be reared upon the soil of Palestine,—certain it is that for him the material and perishable constructions of human skill and labour are chiefly interesting as the embodiment of thought and the suggestion of eternal realities. The universe is God's temple; the body of Christ was God's temple; the Church is the chosen and sacred temple of the Eternal and Supreme. The thoughts of those who meditate upon these remarkable chapters of Ezekiel will be sadly misdirected if they do not ascend to him who is both the Architect of the sanctuary and the one supreme Deity to whom is directed all the sacrifice and all the worship presented within its hallowed precincts.—T.

Ver. 4.—*The office of the prophet.* The angel who was appointed to show to Ezekiel the temple of vision, and to take its measurements in his presence, and to explain its details and its various purposes, prefaced his special mission by an exhortation in which he expressed, in a very complete and instructive manner, the vocation and functions of a true prophet.

I. IN ORDER THAT THERE MAY BE PROPHECY, THERE MUST BE A REVELATION. In the case before us there was a temple to be seen, and there was an angel to exhibit and to explain it. In every case where a man has been called upon to fulfil the office of a prophet, there has been a special manifestation of the Divine mind and will. The prophet may be gifted, original, luminous; but he does not, so far as he is a prophet, utter forth his own thoughts, deal with any matter according to the light of his own reason. There must be a communication from the Being who is the Source of all good for men. Otherwise the vocation of the prophet is endued with no peculiar, Divine authority.

II. IN ORDER THAT THERE MAY BE PROPHECY, THERE MUST BE THE ATTENTIVE AND OBSERVANT INTELLIGENCE. "Behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears." Such was the admonition of the angel to Ezekiel. A prophet must be a man gifted with powers of observation and understanding. He is not a passive medium, but an active agent. He exercises his human faculties, thinks and feels in a truly human way. Even if they had not received the prophetic commission, the seers of Israel would have been "men of light and leading," men "discerning the signs of the times." In a word, to be a prophet, one must be a man.

III. IN ORDER THAT THERE MAY BE PROPHECY, THERE MUST BE A RECEPTIVE SPIRITUAL NATURE. "Set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee." Such was the further admonition addressed to the prophet. His was not a work to be discharged in a perfunctory, official, uninterested manner. Not only was it required that the intellect should be alert, the spiritual nature needed to be receptive and responsive. Intelligence is sufficient for some services; but for a spiritual ministry there is needed a spiritual susceptibility, a spiritual energy. The message of God needs to be assimilated and appropriated, to enter into the prophet's very nature—to become, so to speak, part of himself. The evidence is abundant that such was the case with Ezekiel. He felt deeply what he received and what he had to communicate. It was to him "the burden of the Lord," by which he was oppressed as well as laden, yet which, for his country's sake he was willing to bear.

IV. IN ORDER THAT THERE MAY BE PROPHECY, THERE MUST BE THE COMMUNICATION OF THE TIDINGS, THE THREAT OR THE PROMISE, TO THOSE TO WHOM THE PROPHET

IS SENT. "Declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel." There are natures which are receptive, but not communicative; deep thinkers, who are lacking in the power of the orator, the author, the artist; for whose greatness the world has little reason to be thankful. Mystic communers with heaven may see visions and hear voices, and yet may not be able to communicate their experiences to their fellow-men. Not such was the case with the Hebrew prophets. They went forth from the presence of the Lord as his heralds and authoritative agents and messengers to their countrymen. Nothing hindered them from discharging the duties of their office. They sought not men's favour and they feared not men's frown. Whether men would hear or forbear was not a matter for them to consider. It was theirs to relate what they had seen and heard and known of the counsels of the Eternal.—T.

Ver. 44.—*Singers.* Praise is an essential part of the worship of God. However it may be with the imaginary deities of the heathen, we know of the one true God that he is infinitely great and infinitely good; and that it therefore becomes his creatures to be his worshippers, and that it becomes his worshippers to utter forth his praise—the memory of his great goodness. In the Jewish economy praise occupied a very important part in Divine service, especially during and after the time of David, the sweet singer of Israel. There were persons, gifted by nature and trained by art, who were set apart for the purpose of expressing the nation's gratitude and devotion, by performing "the service of song in the house of the Lord." These had their appointed place in the worship of the temple, and their appointed dwelling-places in its precincts. Their vocation and ministry symbolize the service of praise ever offered both by the Church militant on earth and by the Church triumphant in heaven.

I. IN ORDER TO PSALMODY, THERE MUST BE AN INTELLIGENT NATURE CAPABLE OF APPREHENDING GOD'S GLORIOUS ATTRIBUTES AND ESPECIALLY HIS GREAT GOODNESS. By a figure of speech we represent the heavens, the earth, and the sea, the living creatures which people the globe, the wells that spring into the light of day, the trees of the forests, as all rendering their tribute of praise to the Creator. But this is to project our human feelings upon the world around us. It is absurd to suppose the most sagacious of quadrupeds as even conceiving of God, far less as consciously speaking or singing his praise. But it is the glory of man's nature that his apprehensions are not limited to God's works. He "looks, through nature, up to nature's God." He discerns the tokens of the Divine presence, and finds reasons for believing in the Divine goodness. If he offers praise, his is a reasonable service.

II. IN ORDER TO PSALMODY, THERE MUST BE AN EMOTIONAL NATURE CAPABLE OF FEELING THE KINDNESS AND RESPONDING TO THE LOVE OF GOD. Music is the vehicle of emotion.

> "Why should feeling ever *speak*,
> When thou canst breathe her tones so well?"

A being with no emotion would be without song. Spontaneous is the outflow of feeling—of joy, of sorrow, of love—in the notes of melody. What so fitted to call forth the purest and most exalted strains of music as the loving-kindness of the Lord? As a matter of fact, much of the most exquisite music produced by the great and gifted masters of song has been inspired by religion and religious themes. The oratorios, the anthems, the chorales, of Christian composers, rendered with all the resources of musical art, may be regarded as endeavours to express the tenderest, the most pathetic, the sublimest feelings which the mind of man has ever experienced.

III. IN ORDER TO PSALMODY, THERE MUST BE AN ARTISTIC NATURE CAPABLE OF CONSTRUCTING APPROPRIATE FORMS OF MUSICAL EXPRESSIVENESS. These forms vary with the varying states of human society, of culture, and of civilization. What is adapted to a ruder age may be ill suited to an epoch of refinement. It is a tradition that the music composed by David, and preserved for centuries among the Jews, was taken over by the Christian Church, and so survives in archaic forms of psalmody still used amongst ourselves. However this may be, it is certain that there has never been, in the history of the Jewish or the Christian Church, a period when silence has reigned in the sacred assemblies, when speech has not been accompanied by song. Like all good things, sacred music has been abused, and attention has been given to the artistic qualities rather than to the spiritual import and impression. Yet this is an art which deserves

cultivation, and which will repay for cultivation. Without psalmody, how would our religious sentiments and aspirations be repressed!

IV. IN ORDER TO PSALMODY, THERE MUST BE A PHYSICAL, VOCAL CONSTITUTION, CAPABLE OF GIVING EXPRESSION TO DEVOTIONAL FEELINGS. Instrumental music has taxed the mental powers of the composer and the artistic faculty of the performer to so high a degree that a cultivated and honourable profession has found here abundant scope for study and for skill. But the art of vocal minstrelsy is more glorious and delightful still. There is no music like the human voice; and if this is so when other themes inspire the song, how much more when the high praises of God are poured forth, whether with the enchanting sweetness of a solitary voice, or with the loud and joyful burst of the chorus in which the many blend in one!—T.

Ver. 45.—*Priests.* What would a temple be with no priesthood to minister at its altars, to present the offerings of its worshippers? The priests give meaning and interest to the temple, not only to the scenery of its services, but to its great purpose and aim. The mention in this passage of the priests who dwelt and ministered within the temple precincts suggests reflections of a more general character regarding the office and those who were called to undertake it.

I. HUMANITY IS CONSTITUTED FOR CONSCIOUS AND HAPPY RELATIONS OF INTIMATE FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

II. HUMANITY IS BY SIN RENDERED MORALLY UNFIT FOR SUCH FELLOWSHIP.

III. PRIESTHOOD IS APPOINTED BY GOD HIMSELF AS THE MEDIUM BY WHICH SUCH FELLOWSHIP MAY BE RESTORED AND MAINTAINED.

IV. THE EXERCISE OF THE PRIESTLY OFFICE IS A PERPETUAL EXPRESSION OF MAN'S DEPENDENCE FOR EVERY BLESSING UPON GOD.

V. THE OFFICE OF THE PRIESTHOOD IS ESPECIALLY DESIGNED TO RESTORE THE INTERRUPTED HARMONY OF MORAL RELATIONS BETWEEN MAN AND GOD.

VI. AND TO PRESENT TO GOD FROM MAN THE TRIBUTE AND OFFERING EVER DUE.

VII. THE HEBREW PRIESTHOOD WAS INTENDED TO PREFIGURE AND TO PREPARE FOR THE PRIESTHOOD OF THE SON OF GOD.

APPLICATION. The priesthood, as exercised among the Jews, has for us an interest more than historic. It foreshadowed facts and principles which could only reach their perfect fulfilment and realization in the mediation of Christ. The Jewish priesthood ought not to be regarded as merely typical; it expressed Divine and eternal truths. At the same time, the sacerdotal office of the Lord Jesus cannot be placed upon the same level as the ministry of the temple at Jerusalem. That which was fully exhibited in him was but faintly outlined in his predecessors. Christ's was the real offering, the true sacrifice. And this is made perfectly plain by the provision that he should have no successor in the work of atonement. Yet it must not be forgotten that there is a function of priesthood which is perpetual in the Church—the function of obedience and of praise. In this all true Christians—ministers and worshippers alike—take part. This unceasing offering and sacrifice ascends from the heart-altars of the faithful throughout the spiritual temple of the living God. And this comes up with acceptance through him who is the High Priest of our profession, by whom all offerings that his people present to Heaven are laid upon the upper altar, and are well pleasing to the King and Saviour of all.—T.

Vers. 1—4.—*Vision of the new temple.* These visions of the restored temple are a fitting close to this series of revelations. The opening visions displayed the righteous God marching forth in majestic splendour to vindicate himself. His vast army is at hand to execute his royal will. Now the will of God upon Israel is accomplished. Exile has done its gracious work. The old love of idolatry is killed. In vision at least the people have returned in loyalty to their own King. A regeneration of heart and life has occurred. Bright prospects of return to Palestine open before them. God has pledged himself to reinstate them permanently in Judæa. There remains only one thought—it concerns their temple. This had been the visible symbol of their elevation and their strength. Shall their temple lift its royal domes heavenward again?

I. RIGHT ASPIRATIONS QUALIFY MEN TO RECEIVE FRESH REVELATIONS FROM GOD. The frame of thought and feeling in Ezekiel's mind was an essential condition for

obtaining this vision. Natural principles prevailed then as now. Ezekiel was by birth and office a priest. Nor was he, as many had been, a priest simply by hereditary right. He was in every fibre of his nature a priest. His soul yearned to see Jehovah enthroned in his temple at Jerusalem. He yearned to take his proper place at the altars of the Most High. The visions and promises God had vouchsafed to him touching the reoccupation of the land had revived his hopes. He longed to see the gracious promise fulfilled. To Ezekiel, in this state of sanguine hopefulness, the new vision came. Earnest zeal for God's glory is a condition essential to gain further knowledge of his will. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show to them his covenant." As steel points draw off the electric fluid, so a state of childlike affection draws down communications from God.

II. FOR EVERY KIND OF ENTERPRISE GOD HAS WELL-EQUIPPED SERVANTS. As soon as Ezekiel was transported in vision to Mount Zion, lo! there was a heavenly messenger furnished with plans for the new temple. Without doubt the unfallen angels have differences of character and differences of endowment as great as appear among men. Very likely qualities of mind are even more varied and diverse in heaven than upon earth. Gabriel is described to us as the presence-angel—a sort of prime minister. Michael is always spoken of as engaging in battle for Jehovah—a commander-in-chief in the army of God. Some angels at least have gifts of music and of song. This visitor from the heavenly realm who met Ezekiel on the mount was endowed with architectural skill, and unfolded specifications and plans for the house of God. "His appearance was like the appearance of brass"—steadfast, durable, irresistible. His qualities were the very opposite of a weak, timid, vacillating person. The circumstances were such that severe opposition was expected, and the architect of God was well-prepared for his task. So has it always been in human history. Gideon was the man for his times. Elijah was well adapted for his age. Paul well fitted the niche he occupied.

III. TO RECEIVE REVELATIONS FROM GOD EVERY HUMAN ORGAN MUST BE ACTIVE. "Behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall show thee." The eye and the ear are the channels through which we obtain the raw material of information, which is manufactured into wisdom by the machinery of the mind. God does degrade men by using them only as machines. He will not do for them what they can do for themselves. He will give no premium to indolence. By the diligent use of our highest faculties we rise into higher states of life and joy. It was after a season of prayer that Jesus was transfigured. While David "mused, the fire burned." He that uses well his ten talents obtains largest reward. The eunuch was diligently scanning the Scriptures when the interpreter came to him. While Daniel was speaking in prayer, Gabriel arrived to unfold the heavenly mysteries. We do not receive larger and clearer revelation from God because our minds and hearts are not open wide to receive it. The oil stayed because there was no empty vessel.

IV. DIVINE KNOWLEDGE IS GIVEN THAT IT MAY BE COMMUNICATED. "Declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel." In the kingdom of God no form of selfishness is tolerated. Every man receives in order that he may distribute. This is God's great principle of economy. He kindles the light on one point, that from this point other torches may be lighted. "Freely ye have received, freely give." The fount of knowledge is fed by what it gives out, as well as by what it receives. By virtue of St. Paul's possession of the gospel mysteries he counted himself a debtor both to the Greek and to the barbarian. Men of God are stewards of spiritual blessing, God's almoners to the world. God has enlightened us that the light may shine out upon others. God has enriched us that we may enrich the poor. God has filled us with sacred comfort that we may comfort the distressed. God has made his servants trustees for humanity. "No man liveth unto himself; no man dieth unto himself."—D.

Vers. 5—27.—*God's kingdom divinely organized.* It is no part of God's procedure to provide a sketch-plan for his kingdom and allow others to supply the details. In the kingdom of material nature his matchless wisdom has designed the minutest parts. In the construction of the human body he has taken care to do the best in the articulation of every joint—in the interaction of the most delicate organ. So in the building of his spiritual kingdom he has laid down all the essential principles that are to be

embodied and perpetuated. At the same time, there is ample provision for the adaptation of these principles to the changes incident to the development of human character and incident to the needs of human society.

I. THE LEADING IDEA OF THE TEMPLE IS SEPARATION. "Behold a wall on the outside of the house round about." The etymological meaning of the word "temple" conveys this lesson. It is a place "cut off," *i.e.* cut off from secular uses. The temple of God is capacious enough to include mankind; yet it excludes whatever is selfish, base, corrupting, or perishable. There is exclusion as well as inclusion. Its mission upon the earth is to separate the precious elements from the vile in very man. It is designed to elevate and purify what is excellent in men; but mere dross it purges out. In this work of separation—the separation of the evil from the good—it is a pattern of the heavenly city. Gates are for exclusion and for safety.

II. GOD'S TEMPLE CONVEYS THE IDEA OF ELEVATION. "Then came he to the gate . . . and went up the stairs thereof." The mind of man is, in many respects, dependent upon his body. As by steps we find an easy method for bodily elevation, so with spiritual ascent. An important lesson is left upon the mind. The elevation of the body aids the elevation of the soul. On the great occasions on which God descended and held intercourse with men, the scene was the summit of a mount. On Horeb God manifested himself to Moses. From Gerizim and Ebal the Law was to be proclaimed. On Moriah Abraham was to present the great sacrifice of faith. On Nebo Moses was to close his earthly career. On a mountain (probably Hermon) Jesus was transfigured. From the slopes of Olivet the Saviour ascended to his throne. Without question temple-worship helps to lift the soul into a higher life. The more we are with God the purer and nobler we become.

III. GOD'S TEMPLE OFFERS EASY ACCESS TO MEN. The gates were many. They were wide. They looked in all directions. These facts impressed men with the truth that God desires the society of men. He has not retired from men into remote seclusion. He invites them to the most intimate friendship. His dwelling shall have capacious gates. As with a hundred voices, they seem to accord a hearty welcome. We cannot come too often. We cannot presume too much on his friendship. "God is known in his palaces for a Refuge." The gates of his palace open to every point—north, south, east, and west.

IV. GOD'S TEMPLE IS EMBELLISHED WITH BEAUTY. Between the arches and upon the posts were palm trees. "Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary." All beauty has its fount in God. He finds delight in the outward forms of beauty. All his works partake of beauty. But material beauty is only the shadow of the really beautiful. Holiness is beauty. Goodness is beauty. Love is beauty. Therefore in God's house the beautiful should everywhere appear.

V. GOD'S TEMPLE PROVIDES FOR PLENTIFUL LIGHT. In the gates "there were windows, and in the arches thereof round about." However small the chamber, it had a window. For every department of human life and service God provides light. It is an essential for human progress and for human sanctity. As fast as we appropriate God's spiritual light he supplies more. "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord."

VI. GOD'S TEMPLE HAS STAGES IN THE WAY OF APPROACHING GOD. There was court within court—an outer court and an inner. The proselytes from the Gentiles might not come so near the altars of God as the Hebrews. The people of the tribe of Levi might approach nearer than those of other tribes. The high priest might, once a year, come into closer access to God than any other man on earth. All these arrangements were types of better things, lessons of high spiritual import. God will not tolerate a rebellious will, nor allow, in his presence, falsehood or impurity. The barriers imposed served to teach men the real and tremendous evil of sin; they served to encourage men in the abandonment of sin, that they might have the friendship of God. So far as men are in league with sin they separate themselves from God and from hope and from heaven. It is not easy to regain moral purity after it has been corrupted. It is impossible without God's help. But it is worth a lifelong effort to get back to God, and to live as a child in the sunshine of his smile. The method God has adopted to teach us this lesson is a singular accommodation of his grace to our ignorance and to our weakness.—D.

Vers. 38—47.—*Sacrifice essential to human worship.* The entrances and vestibules of the new temple were planned on a magnificent scale. The mind of the worshipper would be naturally impressed both with the greatness of the Proprietor and with the transcendent importance of the use to which it was devoted. But by what methods will the Sovereign Majesty of heaven be approached? More and more this question oppresses a reflecting man. As he gains the central courts of the temple the answer is clear. Sin is the great separator between man and his Maker. Reconciliation can only be effected by sacrifice. At the altar of burnt offering God will meet with penitent men, and confer on them his mercy. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin."

I. SACRIFICE IS THE TRYSTING-PLACE BETWEEN MAN AND GOD. "The altar was before the house." From the first days of man's fall the mercy of God allowed access for man to the presence of his Maker; yet access not free and unrestrained, as in the pristine state of innocence. Access to God's favour could now be found only at the altar of sacrifice. Hence Cain's suit failed because he brought only the fruits of the ground. Abel was accepted because his faith was loyal to the Divine command, and because he felt the evil of sin. Such sacrifice of animal life could be in no respect proper compensation for moral rebellion against God. Yet it was to man a revelation that God would accept substitution, and it served as a matter-of-fact prophecy, that in due time God would provide an efficacious sacrifice. It was as much for man's welfare as for the maintenance of Divine rule, that God would henceforth meet his fallen creature, and give heed to his prayer, only at the sacrificial altar.

II. SACRIFICE SERVES MANY AND VITAL PURPOSES IN MAN'S SALVATION. In the temple sacrifices were of various kinds, and were presented with great variety of ceremony. There was the sin offering, the trespass offering, the wave offering, etc. These were designed to meet the several wants of men. They expressed gratitude for benefit received; submission to the will of God; confession of past sin; acknowledgment that our sin deserved death; acquiescence in God's plan for forgiveness; a new act of covenant with God; complete devotion of self to the service of Jehovah. The future, as well as the past, was considered. The minds of men must be fitly impressed with the terrific evil of sin and with the excellence that comes out of self-sacrifice. God's stupendous gift wakens our profoundest love. We aspire to act as he acts, and so rise into the better life. Condescension is the road to eminence.

III. SACRIFICE DEMANDS A VARIETY OF HUMAN SERVICE. There were porters to keep the gates and to prevent base intruders. There were men to slay the animals, and men to wash the flesh. There were men in charge of the building, and men in charge of the altar. Some kinds of service were repulsive to the senses; some kinds were joyous and exhilarating. In God's temple there is some service which every loyal subject of Jehovah can render. The least endowed may perform some useful mission. As in nature every dewdrop has its effect, and the tiniest insect performs a useful task, so it is also in the kingdom of grace. The tears of the babe Moses changed the fortunes of the world. The child Samuel was teacher to the high priest of Israel. A lad in the crowd possessed the barley loaves which served as the foundation of the Saviour's miracle. Provision was made in the temple for great variety of servants. The service of God is not arduous. "They also serve who only stand and wait."

IV. SACRIFICE SHOULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY A SERVICE OF SONG. "Without the inner gate were the chambers of the singers." Sacrifice may commence with sorrow; it also ends with joy. "Blessed are they that mourn" here; "they shall be comforted." Music well befits temple-worship. Here, if anywhere, the souls of men should go forth in swelling tides of gladness. Before Jesus and his companions went to Gethsemane they sang a hymn. In the inner dungeon at midnight, with feet bound in the stocks, Paul and Silas sang to God their praise. If joy thrills afresh the hearts of angels when one sinner on earth repents, it is meet that joy should also fill God's temple on earth.—D.

Ver. 3.—*Divine measurement.* Assuming that the realization of this vision is found in no actual structure ever built by the hand of man, but in that great spiritual edifice, the Church of Jesus Christ, which is still in course of erection, we ask what it is that is

measured by the tape, or the reed, which the heavenly messenger holds in his hand. What are the heights and the depths and the lengths that are seen and reckoned in the kingdom of Christ? They are those of—

I. SINCERITY. There may be much singing and many "prayers," and much preaching; there may be multiplied activities of many kinds; but if there be not sincerity and simplicity of heart, there will be nothing for the measuring angel to record. If, however, in the culture of our own character or in the work we do for our Lord, our hearts go forth in genuine endeavour, if we think and feel what we say, if we mean what we do, if the purpose of our soul is toward God and toward the honour of his Name,—then we are really "building;" and the more of spirituality and of earnestness there is in our effort, the higher will the figure be which the recording angel enters in his book.

II. TRUSTFULNESS. "Without faith it is impossible to please God" in anything we undertake for him. The measure of our trustfulness is, to a large extent, the degree of our acceptableness. Trustfulness is in the freeness and fulness of the grace of God, in the presence and the promises of the Son of God, in the power of the Spirit of God to enlighten and to renew. The more of this element in our personal relations with God and in our Christian walk, the higher the sacred fabric rises in the reckoning of the heavenly world.

III. LOVE. This is an essential element in all Christian edification. 1. Love to *Christ himself*. The *restraining* love, which keeps back from all evil; the *constraining* love, which inspires to cheerful and prompt obedience; the *submissive* love, which knows how to endure as seeing the Invisible One; the *lasting* love, which outlives all the changes and triumphs over all the difficulties of human life. 2. Love to *Christian men*; which is more and better than being drawn toward the amiable and the attractive; which consists in the outgoing of the heart toward all the disciples of Jesus Christ *because they are such*, even though in taste and temper and habit of life they may differ from ourselves; which includes the willingness to acknowledge all that love Christ, and to work with them in every open way. 3. Love to *those outside the Christian pale*—the love of a holy pity for men who are wrong *because they are wrong*, which shows itself in active, practical, self-denying labour to raise and to restore them. The practical question for each man and for every Church to ask is this—When the measuring angel comes to us, and applies his reed to *our* worship, *our* work, *our* life, what is the entry he makes? what is his measurement? There may be balance-sheets and attendances, activities and engagements, which are very satisfactory in the human estimate, but if simplicity, trustfulness, love, be not found, there is nothing to count in the reckoning of Heaven (see 1 Cor. xiii.).—C.

VERS. 6—11.—*Entrance to the kingdom.* Much mention is made, in this description of the temple, of the gates of that building; access was provided in abundance to its interior as well as exterior compartments. Having regard to the kingdom of God (of which this ideal structure is a picture (see previous homily), and taking into our thought the work and the teaching of our Lord on the subject, we learn—

I. THAT THERE IS ONE WAY INTO THE KINGDOM. Jesus Christ himself is that Way. "I am the Way, . . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John xiv. 6); "I am the Door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John x. 9). Through him "both [Jews and Gentiles] have access . . . unto the Father" (Eph. ii. 18); "There is one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 John ii. 5). To know Jesus Christ, to trust and love, to serve and follow him—that is the way to find eternal life. "Whosoever believeth in him has life eternal."

II. THAT THERE ARE MANY APPROACHES TO THE KINGDOM. Though there is but one "door" or "way" into the kingdom, but one Divine Saviour in whom to trust and by whom to be redeemed, yet are there many approaches that may be regarded as "gates," many paths that lead to him and to his salvation. We may be led to him: 1. By our sense of the priceless value of the human soul and our knowledge that only he can bless it. 2. By our view of the seriousness of our human life and the desire to place it under his wise and holy guidance. 3. By the example and influence of those to whom we are most nearly related. 4. By the attractiveness we see in him, the Lord of love and truth. 5. By the felt force of the claims of the heavenly Father, and the belief that it is God's will that we should hear and follow him, his Son, etc.

III. THAT MEN COME FROM ALL QUARTERS TO THE KINGDOM. There were gates facing the north, the south, and the east; and in another book (Revelation) we read of gates in all four directions (Rev. xxi. 13). To the broad and blessed kingdom of God all souls come: it is not a provision for one type of mind, or for one particular race, or for one social class, but for all types, races, classes. In Jesus Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, male nor female, bond nor free; there is neither poor nor rich, learned nor ignorant, philosophical nor simple-minded. From every quarter in the great world of men there come to the kingdom those who need and who find all that they crave in Christ Jesus the Lord.

IV. THAT THE GATE IS TOO NARROW FOR SOME. He who is swollen with pride cannot pass through it; nor he who is cumbered with worldliness; nor he who is filled with selfishness; nor he who is gross with self-indulgence (Matt. vii. 14).

V. THAT IT IS BROAD ENOUGH FOR ALL EARNEST SEEKERS. They who are in earnest as disciples of truth, as seekers after God; they who profoundly desire to return unto their heavenly Father and to secure eternal life, will not find the gate of the gospel too narrow. They will gladly part with their pride and their selfishness, with their vanities and their indulgences; they will come eagerly to the Lord and Saviour of mankind, that they may take everything from him and yield everything to him.—C.

Ver. 16.—*Palms upon the posts: ornamental strength.* "Upon each post were palm trees." It is well indeed to bring to the Church of Christ—

I. THE CONTRIBUTION OF STRENGTH. There are disciples who add little to the Church but feebleness. They want to be continually comforted or corrected; to be shielded or to be sustained. We feel that the community to which they belong would be the stronger for their absence, except as they supply suitable objects for the exercise of Christian kindness, and *in this way* for the development of the Church's strength. But it cannot be said that this is at all a satisfactory way of rendering service. We rejoice, and we believe that our Lord himself rejoices, in those who bring a solid contribution of strength to the cause of wisdom and of piety. These are they who, with their Christian principles, bring a trained and robust intelligence, a sacred sagacity, a well-gathered knowledge of men and things; or who bring a liberal spirit, an open hand, a large proportion of their substance; or who bring a loving spirit, a spirit of conciliation and concession into the council, and who are on the side of concord; or who bring warmth, vigour, energy, sustained zeal and hopefulness to the work which is undertaken; or who bring a large measure of devotion, of the spirit of true reverence to the worship of the Church. These are the "posts" of the temple; they "seem to be pillars," and they *are* such. And there is no reason why the same members of the Church who bring their contribution of strength should not add—

II. THE ELEMENT OF BEAUTY. "Upon each post were palm trees." These posts were not unsightly props, whose one and only service was that of sustaining that which rested upon them; they were so fashioned that they adorned what they upheld. It is not always so in the spiritual temple. Some posts have no palm trees engraved upon them; they are rude, bare, uncomely. They are tolerated for the service they render; but for what they are in themselves they are heartily disliked. But this need never be. Why should not the strong be beautiful as well as helpful? why should they not add grace to power? It is a serious mistake men make when they think that they may dispense with the finer excellences of Christian character and life because they contribute an efficiency which others cannot render. The uncultivated rudeness of many a pillar in the Christian "temple" detracts most seriously from its worth; on the other hand, the palm trees upon the posts constitute a very appreciable addition. Be beautiful as well as strong. "Whatsoever things are lovely and of good report" should be "considered" well, and should be secured as well as "whatsoever things are true, honest, just, and pure." Add to your faith virtue (manliness) and knowledge, but do not fail to add temperance (self-command), patience, and charity as well. Strive after, pray for, carefully cultivate, all that is beautiful in the sight of man, in temper, in bearing, in spirit, in word and deed; so shall the value of your strength be greatly enhanced in the estimate of Christ.—C.

Vers. 22, 25, 29, 33.—*The windows of the Church.* Allusion is made again and

again to the windows which were to be provided in this sacred edifice. The Church of Christ must be well furnished with windows, and they must not be closed, but open. For it has to—

I. ACQUAINT ITSELF WITH DIVINE TRUTH. Through the open window we look out and see the busy street and the ways of men; or we see the fields and the hills and the work of God. We acquaint ourselves with what is passing in the world. The Church of Christ must keep its windows open, and be actively engaged in learning all that it can acquire of the heart and ways of men, and also of the truth and the purposes of God. It, after its Lord, is to be "the light of the world" (Matt. v. 14). It is to be the source of all sacred knowledge to the world; it is to enlighten men on the two supreme subjects of their own spiritual nature, with all its possibilities of good and evil, and of the Divine Being, with all his holiness and his grace, with all his power and his patience, with all his expectation from them and all his nearness to them and his abiding in them. And if it is to discharge this high and noble function, the Church must not only treasure what it has gained of heavenly wisdom, but it must be *always learning* of God, always admitting the light of heaven, always be recipient of his truth as that truth bears on the present life of men, as it affects the spiritual and social struggles they are now passing through. The Church that would not close its door must keep its windows open, must honestly and earnestly believe that

> "God *has* yet more light and truth
> To break forth from his Word."

II. ADMIT HEAVENLY INFLUENCES. The open window means the admission, not only of the light, but also the air of heaven; and we need the cleansing air quite as much as the enlightening ray. Shut up to ourselves, our souls become defiled, deteriorated, enfeebled; open to the renewing and cleansing air of heaven, they are purified, ennobled, strengthened. It is a very great advantage to live or to worship in a building of good rather than of poor dimensions, because its air is purer and more healthful. It is a very great benefit to belong to a Church that is not cramped and bound within narrow limits, in which there is ample room for the circulation of all reverent and earnest thought; that is the most spiritually healthful condition. But however large and free be the community, we must have the incoming of the influences which are outside, which are from above—the quickening, illumining, kindling, cleansing, power of the Spirit of God. Without this we shall surely suffer deterioration and decline—a decline that slopes towards death itself. We must keep the heart open, we must keep the Christian Church open, to the best and highest influences, if we would be and do what Christ calls us to accomplish.

III. ENGAGE IN HOLY ACTIVITIES. We cannot work in the dark; we pray thus—

> "Lord, give me light to do thy work!"

And we do well to pray thus. But we must take care that we do not shut out the light by our own bad building, by our own institutions, habits, organizations, prejudices. We must make our arrangements, lay our plans, form our habits, so that we receive all that we can gain with a special view to *Christian work*. The Church that is not learning of Christ in order to labour for him, is lacking in one most important characteristic; it is missing one main end of its existence. Let us take care that our institutions, our societies, our Churches, are so constructed that we shall be in the best possible position, be under the most favourable conditions, for earnest and efficient work. Otherwise we shall not be such a spiritual "temple" as our Lord will look upon with approval; and his measuring angel (see ver. 3) will have no satisfactory entry to make in his record and to repeat to his Lord.—C.

Vers. 26, 31.—*Spiritual ascent.* "There were seven steps to go up to it"—the outer court; "and the going up to it [the inner court] had eight steps." Translating this into the Christian analogue, we learn—

I. THAT TO BE IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST IS TO OCCUPY A NOBLE HEIGHT. The base of the temple was the summit of a "very high mountain" (ver. 2); to be anywhere within even its outer precincts was to be far above the world. To be in the kingdom of God, even to be the least therein, is to stand in the place of very *high*

privilege indeed (see Matt. xi. 11). But not of privilege only; of *spiritual well-being* also. It is to be high and far above the baseness of selfishness, of vanity, of ingratitude, of rebelliousness; above the low ground of unbelief, of indecision, of procrastination. It is to live and move on the sacred heights of devotion, of sacred service, of consecration, of the sonship and friendship of the living God.

II. THAT WITHIN THAT KINGDOM ARE DEGREES OF SPIRITUAL ALTITUDE. Not every one that is "in Christ Jesus" stands on the same spiritual level. There is not only considerable *variety* of character and service, there is also much *difference in degree* of attainment. There are those who are behind and those who are before in the race; there are those who stand lower down in the outer court and those who stand higher up in the inner court. Many are the degrees among the disciples of Christ in: 1. *Knowledge.* Some have but a very elementary acquaintance with the truth of God; some hold the faith of Christ much mixed with corrupt accretions; others have a comparatively clear view of the doctrines taught by Christ and by his apostles; there are those who have gone far into "the deep things of God." 2. *Piety.* A Christian man may have but a slender capacity for devotion; he may only be able to worship God and commune with him feebly and occasionally, with no power of sustained devotion; or he may have ascended the higher ground, and be "praying always;" his "walk may be close with God;" he may be "a devout man and full of the Holy Ghost." 3. *Moral worth.* From the recently converted idolater whose licentious habits cling to him and have to be hardly and laboriously torn away by long and earnest struggle, to the saintly man or woman who, inheriting the purified nature and disposition of reverent and godly parents, has breathed the air of purity and goodness all his days, and has grown up into holiness and Christliness in a very marked degree, there is a great ascent. 4. *Influence*, and consequent usefulness. There are those whose influence counts for very little among their fellows; there are others who weigh much, whose presence is a power for good everywhere, who can produce a great and valuable effect by their words of wisdom.

III. THAT SPIRITUAL ASCENT IS ATTAINED BY DIVINELY PROVIDED MEANS. There were steps or stairs leading up from the lower to the higher ground within the temple. There are steps of which we may avail ourselves if we would rise in the kingdom of God. They are these: 1. *Worship;* including public worship in the sanctuary, meeting the Master at his table, private prayer in the home and the quiet chamber. 2. *Study;* including the reading of the Scriptures and also of the lives of the best and noblest of the children of men. 3. *Fellowship* with the good; associating daily and weekly with those like-minded with ourselves, and choosing for our most intimate friends those, and those only, whose convictions and sympathies are sustaining and uplifting. 4. *Activity* in one or other of the many fields of sacred usefulness.—C.

Ver. 44.—*Sacred song.* "The chambers of the singers." The ideal Church would not be complete without the service of sacred song. Abundant arrangement was made for this order of worship in the first temple (1 Kings x. 12; 1 Chron. xxv.). It was to be a daily offering unto the Lord (1 Chron. xxiii. 30). And it has found a large and honourable place in the Church of Christ. The Master himself and his disciples "sang an hymn" on the most solemn and sacred of all occasions (Matt. xxvi. 30); and Paul refers to "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" as if they were well known in the experience of the early Church. This service of song should be—

I. COMPREHENSIVE IN ITS RANGE. It should not only include praise (with which it is more particularly identified; see *infra*), but also *adoration*, *e.g.* "We praise, we worship thee, O God," etc.; and *confession*, *e.g.* "Oppressed with sin and woe," etc.; and *faith*, *e.g.* "My faith looks up to thee," etc.; and *consecration*, *e.g.* "My gracious Lord, I own thy right," etc.; and *prayer* for the Divine guidance and inspiration, *e.g.* "O thou who camest from above," etc., "O God of Bethel, by whose hand," etc.; and *resignation*, *e.g.* "My God, my Father, while I stray," etc.; and *solemn, reverent challenge* to one another, *e.g.* "Come we that love the Lord," etc., "Stand up, stand up for Jesus," etc., "Ye servants of God," etc.; and *holy, heavenly expectation*, *e.g.* "Jerusalem, my happy home." So that there is no sentiment suitable to reverent lips, no grace of Christian character, that may not find expression in sacred song; and such utterance may not only be true worship, but it may give real relief

to the full and perhaps burdened soul, while it also deepens conviction and elevates character.

II. MARKED BY THREE CHARACTERISTICS. 1. *Musical harmony.* For that which we offer to our Lord should be the very best we can bring; not the blemished but the whole, not the disfigured but the beautiful, not the rude but the cultured, not the discordant but the harmonious. 2. *Spirituality.* The God who himself *is* a Spirit *must* be worshipped in spirit and in truth (John iv. 24). And however musical may be the sound, no service of song even *approaches* the satisfactory which is not spiritual; we must make melody *in our heart*, as well as with our voice, unto the Lord (Eph. v. 19). 3. *Congregational.* There are services in which it is not possible for "all the people" to participate audibly; but these are exceptional; as a rule, the order of worship should be such that every voice should be heard "blessing and praising God," for expression is the true friend of feeling.

III. JOYOUS IN ITS PREVAILING NOTE. The word "praise" is commonly associated with "singing." The singers sing "the praises of Jehovah." As already said, there is no spiritual experience to which vocal utterance may not be well and wisely given in sacred song. But the *prevailing strain* is that of praise or thanksgiving. And this may well be so when we realize, as we should in the praise of God: 1. How worthy, in his own Person and character, is the Lord our Saviour of our most reverent and joyful praise. 2. How great things he wrought and suffered for us when he dwelt among us. 3. How perfect is the "great salvation," and how open to all mankind without reserve (Jude 3). 4. How high are the privileges and how heavenly the blessings we have in him whilst we live below; how much it is to be able to say, "For us to live *is Christ*." 5. How grand is the heritage to which we move.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLI.

The present chapter continues the description of "the house," and falls into four subdivisions. (1) The interior of the temple, or the holy and most holy places (vers. 1—4); (2) the wall and the side buildings (vers. 5—11); (3) the gizrah, or separate place (vers. 12—14); (4) the projecting portions of the temple building (vers. 15—26).

Vers. 1—4.—*The interior of the temple.*

Ver. 1.—**The temple.** הַהֵיכָל, frequently applied to the whole building (2 Kings xxiv. 13; 2 Chron. iii. 17; Jer. l. 28; Hag. ii. 15; Zech. vi. 14, 15), is here used of the nave of the temple, the holy place, as distinguished from the holy of holies (comp. 1 Kings vi. 5, 17; vii. 50). Schröder alone of commentators holds by the extended meaning. The measuring began from the east wall of the holy place. **The posts** (אֵילִים), as in ch. xl. 9, the corner pillars on each side of the entrance, measured six cubits broad, whereas those of the porch measured only five (ch. xl. 48). The phrase, **The breadth of the tabernacle**; or, *the tent* (הָאֹהֶל), has occasioned difficulty. Hitzig, Ewald, and Smend propose to substitute for הָאֹהֶל the word קָאַיִל ("post"), which might in itself be unobjectionable, only no such device is required to render the clause intelligible. It is sufficient to understand the phrase as signifying that the measurements noted had a special relation to the entire breadth of the temple, here styled "tabernacle," or "tent," to indicate the covered portion of the edifice, which, in this respect, and in respect of its being the place of meeting between Jehovah and Israel, resembled the ancient sanctuary of the wilderness.

Ver. 2.—**The breadth of the door**, *i.e.* of the opening from the porch, **was ten cubits**; whereas the door into the porch was eleven cubits (ch. xl. 49). This would have the effect of rendering the door into the holy place more conspicuous. **The sides** (or, *shoulders*) **of the door**—according to Kliefoth, "the side walls," from the door to the corner pillars; according to Keil, the shoulders lay behind the pillars—were **five cubits on the one side, and five cubits on the other**; *i.e.* were as broad as the posts of the porch. **The length of the holy place, forty cubits, and the breadth, twenty**, were the same as in the Solomonic structure. The entire frontage of the holy place was 20 cubits of interior breadth + 12 (2 × 6) cubits, as breadth of pillars = 32 cubits; or, otherwise, 6 + 6, for the two pillars, 5 + 5 for the sides, and 10 for the door opening = 32 cubits in all.

Ver. 3.—**Then went he inward**; *i.e.* into the most holy place. As this could not be entered even by a priest, but only by the high priest once a year (Exod. xxx. 10; Lev. xvi. 17; Heb. ix. 7), Ezekiel was left without, while "the man" announced to him in succession the measurements of the *adytum*, as these were taken. First, that of *the* **post of the door** (the singular for the plural, meaning the post on either side of the doorway) **two cubits**. Next, that of the door itself, which is given first as **six** and second as **seven cubits**. Kliefoth and Keil take the six as the height and the seven as the breadth of the entrance into the holy of holies; but as no other measurement of height occurs throughout this description, Dr. Currey regards "six" as the distance from "post" to "post," and "seven" as the actual width of the door, each post projecting half a cubit beyond the hinge of the door, which opened inward. Ewald and Villalpandus, after the LXX., read, "the entrance six cubits and the flanks of the entrance seven cubits;" and these figures, 7 + 6 + 7, certainly make up the breadth of the interior; only it is impossible to extract this meaning from the Hebrew without tampering with the text.

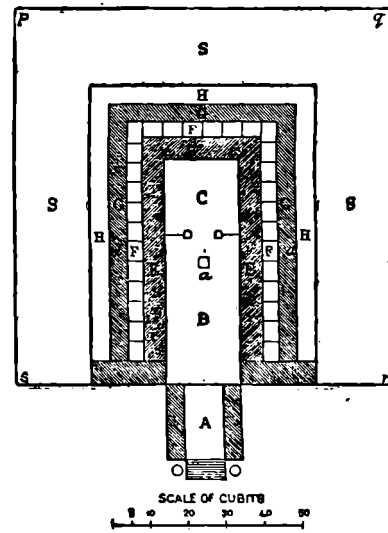
Ver. 4.—The holy of holies was an exact square of twenty cubits, as in the temple of Solomon (1 Kings vi. 20), and to the measuring-man, who had turned himself round, lay along the whole breadth of the temple or holy place.

Vers. 5—11.—*The wall and side buildings.*

Ver. 5.—The measuring commenced with **the wall of the house**, *i.e.* with the outer wall, which, beginning at the pillars (ver. 1), enclosed the temple on its south, west, and north sides. Its great thickness, six cubits, corresponded with and even surpassed the colossal proportions of architecture in the ancient East. The walls of Solomon's temple, though not mentioned in either Kings or Chronicles, could hardly have been less than four cubits thick (see 1 Kings vi. 6), and were probably more (Schürer). Like the Solomonic (1 Kings vi. 5—10), the Ezekelian temple had **side chambers**, which, like those of the earlier building, served as storehouses for priests' clothing, temple utensils, and temple treasures (1 Kings vii. 51; 2 Kings xi. 2; 2 Chron. v. 1), and measured four cubits broad in the clear.

Ver. 6.—The side chambers were **three, one over another, and thirty in order**; literally, *side chamber over side chamber, three and thirty times;* which means that they were ranged in three stories of thirty each; in this, again, agreeing, as to number and position, with the chambers in Solomon's temple (see Josephus, 'Ant.,' viii. 3. 2). It is not needful to alter the text, as Böttcher, Hitzig, Hävernick, and Ewald propose to do, in order to make it read, with the LXX., "chamber against chamber, thirty and (this) three times," on the ground that עֵצֶת and not עַל is the preposition, because in Ezekiel עֵצֶת often stands for עַל (ch. xviii. 6; xxxi. 12; xl. 2). How the chambers were arranged along the three sides is not stated; but most likely there were twelve threes on each of the longer sides, the north and the south, and six threes on the shorter or western side. Like the chambers in Solomon's temple (1 Kings vi. 6), those in Ezekiel's were not fastened to "the wall of the house," *i.e.* of the temple proper; the only question is whether they were built against the temple wall, as Kliefoth, Keil, Smend, and Schröder suppose, or, as Ewald and Dr. Currey seem to think, against another wall, five cubits thick (ver. 9), which ran parallel to

THE TEMPLE.



A, porch of temple; B, holy place, 20 × 40 cubits; C, holy of holies, 20 × 20 cubits; E, wall of house, 6 cubits; F, side chambers, 4 cubits; G, wall of chambers, 5 cubits; H, light passage, 5 cubits (in other plans, this light passage runs in front of the chambers); *p*, *q*, *r*, *s*, temple area, 100 cubits square; S, S, S, free space, 20 cubits broad; *a*, altar of incense in the holy place; *d*, *d*, doors of side chambers.

the temple wall, and which, having been built expressly for the support of the side chambers, might properly enough be said to be "of the house," *i.e.* belonging to it. In the former case the chambers would

doubtless be fastened to the temple wall by means of "ledges," "holds," "rebates," as in the temple of Solomon; in the latter case, as Ewald translates, there would be "a light passage between the wall of the house and the side chambers around."

Ver. 7.—**In the side chambers an enlarging** took place as they went up, *i.e.* the floorage of the second story exceeded that of the first, and the floorage of the third that of the second; though how this was effected can only be conjectured. If the chambers were built against the temple wall, then probably the wall at each story went in, say a cubit or a cubit and a half from the outside, so as to admit the beams; or, if the chambers were built against an outside wall, a similar recession of the wall from the inside may have taken place. In either case, the (interior) **breadth of the house**, *i.e.* of the side chambers, would be **upward**, and would increase from the lowest chamber to the highest by the midst. Plumptre, after Kliefoth, suggests that the increasing size of the chambers in the three stories may have been due to projecting galleries. Ewald, taking "house" as "the temple," supposes that it gradually became bigger, *i.e.* broader, as it rose, which could be the case only if the side chambers were built against the temple wall, and the increased width of the stories was secured by projecting galleries or corridors. Greater obscurity attaches to the second clause, **and a winding about still upward to the side chambers**, which the Authorized Version and some expositors regard as an indication that Ezekiel's temple had a spiral staircase like that in Solomon's temple (see 1 Kings vi. 8); and probably some such mode of passing from story to story did exist in Ezekiel's temple; yet the clause, when properly rendered, does not refer to this. The Revised Version reads, "And the side chambers were broader as they encompassed *the house* higher and higher; for the encompassing of the house went higher and higher round about the house; therefore the breadth of the house *continued* upward; and so one went up (most likely by a spiral stair) from the lowest *chamber* to the highest by the middle *chamber*."

Ver. 8 explains that "the house" did not stand upon the level ground, but, like many temple buildings in antiquity (see Schürer, in Riehm's 'Handwörterbuch,' art. "Tempel Salomo"), upon a **height**—or, *raised basement* (Revised Version)—**round about**, which agrees with the statement in ch. xl. 49 that the temple was approached by means of a stair. In consequence of this, the foundations of the side chambers were **a full reed of six great cubits**; or, *of six cubits to the joining* (Revised Version); "six cubits to the story" (Ewald); literally, *six cubits to the armpit*. This can hardly mean six cubits each equal to the distance from the elbow to the wrist, which would be a new definition of the length of the reed; but, as Hävernick and Kliefoth propose, must be taken as an architectural term indicative of the point where one portion of the building joined on to another. Accordingly, by most interpreters the six cubits are considered to be a statement of the height of the ceiling above the floor in each story, which would give an elevation of eighteen cubits for the three stories; but probably they mark only the height of the temple and side chamber basis above the ground. Kliefoth includes both views, and obtains an altitude of twenty-four cubits from the ground to the temple roof.

Ver. 9.—**The thickness of the wall, which was for the side chambers on the outside**, is next mentioned as having been **five cubits**, *i.e.* the same as the breadth of the wall of the porch (ch. xl. 48), but one cubit thinner than that of the temple (ver. 5). The clause which follows is obscure. By *that* **which** *was* **left**, the Authorized and Revised Versions understand **the place of the side chambers that were within**—or, *that belonged to the house* (Revised Version)—without intending to assert that the whole space left, which was five cubits (ver. 11), was occupied by the side chambers, which were only four cubits broad (ver. 5). Accepting these measurements, Kliefoth and Keil regard the free space as a walk of five cubits broad on the outside of the side chambers. Ewald, and Dr. Currey, in the 'Speaker's Commentary,' place the five cubits between the temple wall and the side chambers.

Ver. 10.—Ewald and Smend, following the LXX., combine vers. 9 and 10 thus: "And that which was left between the side chambers of the house and the cells (along the inner court wall) was twenty cubits round about the house on every side." Interpreters who reject this combination of the verses explain ver. 10 as a statement of the distance between the outside wall of the side chambers and the cells of the inner court. Between the two lay **the wideness of twenty cubits**; *i.e.* a free space of such breadth on the north, south, and west sides of the house.

Ver. 11.—**The place that was left** has been differently explained (see above on ver. 9); but on any hypothesis the side chambers opened on the free space towards the north and towards the south, *i.e.* one row of chambers was entered by a door from the south, another by a door from the north. The corridor into which the chambers opened—whether between them and the

house (Ewald, Currey) or between them and an outside wall (Kliefoth, Hengstenberg, Keil)—was five cubits broad. Thus the whole breadth of the temple court can be obtained.

I. The breadth of the court—

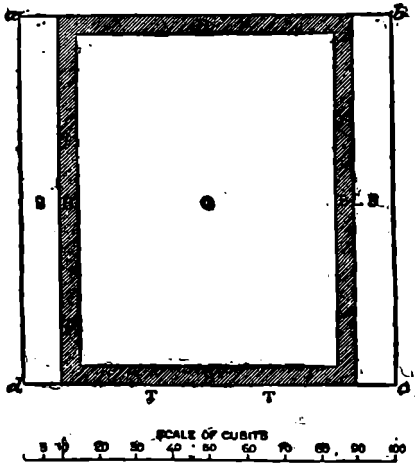
1. Breadth of the house	...	20 cubits
2. Breadth of wall, 6 × 2 cubits	=	12 „
3. Breadth of chambers, 4 × 2 „	=	8 „
4. Breadth of chamber wall, 5 × 2 „	=	10 „
5. Breadth of corridor, 5 × 2 „	=	10 „
6. Breadth of free space, 20 × 2 „	=	40 „
Total	...	100 „

II. The length of the court—

1. The length of the house	...	60 cubits
2. The temple wall	...	6 „
3. The chambers	...	4 „
4. The chamber wall	...	5 „
5. The corridor	...	5 „
6. The space towards the west		20 „
Total	...	100 „

The "house" was thus one hundred cubits square. The porch of the house was reckoned as belonging to the inner court (ch. xl. 48).

THE SEPARATE PLACE.



G, the gizrah, or separate place, 90 × 70 cubits; B, wall of gizrah, 6 cubits thick; S, free space, 10 cubits broad; T, T, temple place, 20 cubits broad.

Vers. 12—14.—*The separate place.*

Ver. 12.—The building that was before the separate place. The word הַגִּזְרָה, occurring only in this chapter, and translated "separate place," is derived from a root signifying to "cut off," and here denotes a space behind the temple on the west, which was marked off from the rest of the ground on which the temple with its courts and chambers stood, and devoted most likely to less sacred purposes. Behind Solomon's temple lay a similar space (2 Kings xxiii. 11; 1 Chron. xxvi. 18), with buildings upon it and a separate way out; and as the name gizrah appears to convey the notion of something that required to be kept apart and removed from the sacred precincts, the opinion of Kliefoth is probably correct that "this space with its buildings was to be used for the reception of all refuse, sweepings, all kinds of rubbish—in brief, of everything that was separated or rejected when the holy service was performed in the temple, and that this was the reason why it received the name of 'the separate place.'" The dimensions of this building were (1) the breadth, seventy cubits; (2) the length, ninety cubits; (3) the thickness of the wall, five cubits round about.

Vers. 13, 14.—Thus the whole breadth of this erection was seventy *plus* ten, or eighty cubits; which, with ten cubits of free space on the north and south sides, make a hundred cubits in all. Its whole length was ninety *plus* ten, or a hundred cubits. The entire area was thus once more a hundred cubits square. At this point, again, a convenient estimate of the whole dimensions of the temple area may be made.

I. The breadth of the area from west to east—

1. The separate place (including walls)	...	100 cubits
2. The "house" (with free space behind)	...	100 „
3. The inner court	...	100 „
4. The outer court (the two gates with space between them)	...	200 „
Total	...	500 „

II. The length of the area from north to south—

1. The outer court (the two northern gates with spaces between them)	...	200 cubits
2. The "house" (with free space on both sides)	...	100 „
3. The outer court (the two southern gates with distance between them)	...	200 „
Total	...	500 „

Vers. 15—26.—The *projecting portions* of the temple building.

Ver. 15.—With this verse begins a summary of measurements of which some have

been already given, while others are new. Starting from the gizrah, or separate place, this summary mentions that the "man" measured (1) the whole length of the erection; (2) the length of its "galleries" on the north and south sides; and (3) the inner temple with the porches of the court. The length of the separate place is not stated, that having been already done (ver. 13). The length of the galleries is specified as a hundred cubits, which shows they extended along the whole side of the building. As for the nature of these "galleries," or גַּזְבָּרוֹת, nothing can be ascertained from the derivation of the word. The LXX. renders it in this verse by ἀπόλοιπα ("things left over"), in ch. xlii. 3 and 5 by περίστυλα and στοαί: the Vulgate has here *ethecas*, the Hebrew Latinized, and in ch. xlii. *porticus*. The *ethekim* were most likely passages or porches running along both (north and south) sides of the building, and supported either by pillars or ledges in the wall. The inner temple, which was measured, was the "house" which stood between the gizrah and the inner court; the porches of the court were the gate buildings in the inner and outer courts. Of all these the dimensions have already been reported, and are not again rehearsed.

Vers. 16, 17 introduce several new details. (1) That the door-posts (rather, thresholds), and the narrow (or, closed) windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, were covered with a wainscotting of wood from the ground up to the windows. (2) That the windows, whether openings on the first floor (Kliefoth) or skylights in the roof (Hengstenberg), were "covered," which may signify, as Ewald and Plumptre think, that they were not left open, but protected by a lattice-work of bars or planks; or, as Currey suggests, that they were wainscotted as well as the space from the ground to the windows. (3) That nothing was constructed by caprice or at random, but that all about the building proceeded by exact measurement.

Vers. 18—20.—As in Solomon's temple (1 Kings vi. 29), the wainscotting was adorned with artistic carving of **cherubim and palm trees**, a palm tree and a cherub standing alternately. Each cherub had two of its four faces exhibited (since four could not be conveniently represented on a plain surface) —a man's face (symbolizing the rational creation) directed towards the palm tree on one side, and a young lion's face (symbolizing the irrational creation) turned towards the palm tree on the other side. This particular style of ornamentation was employed **from the ground unto above the door**, which Plumptre interprets as an indication of the height of the palm trees and cherubic figures, but which probably meant the same thing as the preceding clause, "through all the house round about." Cherubic figures formed part of the adornment of the tabernacle curtains (Exod. xxvi. 1; xxxvi. 8). (On the nature of the cherubim and their symbolic significance, see ch. i. 5—10.)

Ver. 21.—**The posts of the temple** were **squared**; literally, *as for the temple the door-posts* were *squared*, or "the sanctuary post work of square form" (Keil). The remaining clauses ought to read as in the Revised Version, "As for the face of the sanctuary, the appearance *thereof* was as the appearance *of the temple*," the sanctuary being the holy of holies as distinguished from the holy place or the house as a whole. The precise force of the last words, **the appearance as the appearance**, is supposed by Kliefoth and Keil to be that the sanctuary door, like that of the temple, had square posts; by Ewald, that it appeared to be what it really was; by Plumptre, that the appearance was like that he (Ezekiel) had formerly described; by Currey, that the appearance in this vision was the same as in the other visions, and as in the actual temple (comp. ch. xliii. 2). Something can be said for each of these attempts to elucidate a dark phrase. Smend and Hitzig, follow the LXX. in connecting the last clause of ver. 21 with ver. 22 in this fashion, "And in front of the holy place was an appearance like the sight of a wooden altar."

Ver. 22.—**The altar.** This was the altar of incense (Exod. xxx. 1, etc.), which stood in the holy place in contradistinction to the altar of burnt offering, which was located in the outer court. The altar of burnt offering in Solomon's temple was of brass (2 Chron. iv. 1), and in the tabernacle of shittim wood (Exod. xxvii. 1); the altar of incense in the tabernacle (Exod. xxx. 1) and in Solomon's temple (1 Kings vii. 48) was constructed of wood overlaid with gold, but in this temple only of wood. Plumptre, commenting on this, writes, "Possibly Ezekiel shared the feelings of Daniel (ix. 25), that the rebuilding would be 'in troublous times,' and did not contemplate an abundance of gold as likely to be the outcome of the scant offerings of an impoverished people." The dimensions of this altar in the tabernacle were two cubits high and one cubit long and broad; in the Solomonic temple, though not stated, they were probably the same as in the tabernacle; in Ezekiel's temple they were three cubits high, two cubits long (and probably two cubits broad). The corners of the altar were most likely "the horns, or horn-shaped points projecting at the corners." The length. Ewald, Keil, Smend, and others, after the LXX., change into "base," "stand," or "pedestal," on the

ground that the length has been already mentioned, and that one does not usually speak of a length being of wood; but it does not strike one as peculiarly objectionable to say that the altar had corner pieces, a length, and walls (or sides) of wood, meaning thereby to intimate that it was wholly constructed of timber. When the prophet's attention had been directed to it, the guide who accompanied him observed, **This is the table that is before the Lord**, not because, as Böttcher conjectured, the altar was regarded as including the table of shewbread, but because in the Law the offerings laid upon the altar had been spoken of as the bread of God (see Lev. xxvi. 6, 8, 17, 21, 22; and comp. Mal. i. 7); and because in this vision table and altar appear to be used interchangeably (see ch. xliv. 16).

Vers. 23—26.—**The doors of the temple and of the sanctuary** form the next subject for description. Again as in the Solomonic edifice (1 Kings vi. 31, etc.), the holy place and the holy of holies had two doors; *i.e.* each had one door composed of two turning (or, folding) leaves, ornamented, like the walls of the house, with carvings of cherubim and palms. On the face of the porch without were **thick planks**, by which Ewald understands "foliage" or "leafwork," but which, with greater likelihood, were either as Keil renders, "mouldings of wood" for the threshold; or "cornicings," as Kliefoth translates; if not, as Smend suggests, projecting beams to afford shelter to one standing in the porch; or as Hengstenberg and Plumptre say, "steps." The last verse states that narrow or closed (as in ver. 16) windows admitted light into the porch, while carvings of palm trees adorned its walls on each side. The cherubic figures, Plumptre hints, were absent, because the porch was a place of less sanctity than the temple. Hengstenberg notes that the words, "thick planks," "thick beams," or "steps," as he translates, fitly close this description, "as placing the extreme east over against the extreme west with which it began."

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The new temple.* Ezekiel is a priest (ch. i. 3). It is natural that his thoughts should run on the lines of his professional occupations, and travel to the familiar haunts of his old life. Thus we find that with him the picture of the restoration centres in a glorified temple, just as to Isaiah the statesman of war-times it appears as an era of unparalleled peace (Isa. xi. 6), and as to Daniel the minister of a foreign court it appears as a kingdom conquering the great world-empires (Dan. vii. 27). The happy future is so rich and wide and manifold that it has room for all of these prophecies. Each prophet may conceive it in his own style. We must combine all their various visions if we would gain anything like a complete idea of its character, and even then we shall fail, for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). Let us now consider the special suggestiveness of the restored temple. We know that a new temple was built on Mount Zion. But the very building of it enshrined large ideas concerning God's great and perfect restoration of his people.

I. THE PRESENCE OF GOD. The temple is more than a place of assembly. It is a house in which God dwells. The tabernacle in the wilderness was called the "tent of meeting," *i.e.* the tent in which God meets man. There is no temple in St. John's new Jerusalem, because God fills the whole city with his presence, *i.e.* the whole city is a temple. The Christian Church is growing into a great temple for the dwelling of God. God dwells now in the midst of his people. This is their highest privilege. The dwelling of God in heaven constitutes its bliss.

II. HOLINESS. The temple was sacred. It had its holy place reserved for the priests, and its holy of holies into which only the high priest could enter, and he but once a year. Even the court of the congregation was strictly confined to Jews, and for a Gentile to enter it was accounted a dreadful profanation—as we see in the case of the attack of a mob on St. Paul, on the ground that he had been a party to such a profanation (Acts xxi. 28). Now God calls his people to holy living. They are to be all priests, with free access to his presence (Heb. iv. 16). Their holiness is to be real and spiritual, not ritual and ceremonial like that of the priests of Israel. The sanctity of the Church is just the holiness of the lives of her members. It is not the church that sanctifies the worshippers, but the worshippers who sanctify the church.

III. WORSHIP. 1. There were *sacrifices* in the temple. Christ is our Sacrifice, and he is in his Church. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper commemorates that one

supreme sacrifice. We have now to offer our bodies as living (not slain) sacrifices (Rom. xii. 1). 2. There was *service in* the temple. Levites as well as priests worked there. It was a busy scene of activity. Christ's people are all priests and Levites. They are not called to gaze at a spectacle, but to take an active part in the work of the Church. 3. There was *praise* in the temple. The sons of Korah and their later representatives made its walls resound with loud, if not always with what we should call sweet, music. The Christian life should be as a glad psalm of praise.

Ver. 12.—*Solidity.* "The wall of the building was five cubits thick." This suggests a solid structure.

I. THE STRUCTURE OF SALVATION IS SOLID. The temple was strong as a castle. Indeed, it was used as a fortress in the time of the Roman siege of Jerusalem, and was the last part of the city to yield to the foe. The Church of God is better than an ark on the waters; it is a mighty fortress, built upon a strong foundation, and strongly protected by the presence of God. We need not fear for our spiritual shelter. It will not be blown away with every wind of doctrine. What Christ has done for us will stand the hardest strain.

II. THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS SOLID. There are, indeed, some Christian people whose faith seems to be no better than the flimsiest summer tent, quite unfit to stand against the least gale of doubt, temptation, or trouble. But he who is really and earnestly endeavouring to live the Christian life by the grace of God will find that, though he is weak, God can make him strong, and build up his spiritual life into a vigour at which the man himself may well be surprised.

III. THE STRUCTURE OF TRUTH IS SOLID. There is a great deal in men's opinions of religion that will need to be swept away by widening knowledge. But this is not truth. As soon as a real fact is reached, no granite from Aberdeen can be more hard and firm. When we reach truth our feet touch the rock, and when we build up our teachings out of truths they must stand. "Truth is great, and it must prevail."

IV. THE STRUCTURE OF GOOD WORK IS SOLID. Here is the test by which to reveal showy, worthless work, and to distinguish it from that which is of real value. There are men who build on the right foundation, and yet only pile up wood, hay, and stubble. Their work will be burnt, though they themselves will be saved (1 Cor. iii. 13—15). But when a man with an honest heart toils unpretentiously to build up what is real and true—to better society, to spread the gospel by it—all on the foundation of Christ, he may rest assured that his work will stand. Such work is solid.

V. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IS SOLID. The Church has stood many shocks and dangers—temptations and persecutions. Still she endures. Philosophies, social systems, and political movements have risen and fallen. But the Church of Christ has outlived them all. She outlived the Roman empire and the ancient civilization. She will outlive her rivals in thought and social movements in the present day.

VI. HEAVEN IS SOLID. It is no vague cloudland. Christ spoke of his Father's *house* (John xiv. 1). St. Paul contrasted the *house* not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, with the present temporary *tabernacle* of the earthly body (2 Cor. v. 1). The writer to the Hebrews shows us Abraham looking "for a city which hath *foundations*, whose Builder and Maker is God" (Heb. xi. 10).

Ver. 18.—"*Cherubims and palm trees.*" Ezekiel is here in the midst of his favourite imagery. But as there were no palm trees in the old tabernacle of the wilderness, nor in Solomon's temple, why does the prophet plant them among his cherubim?

I. THE FUTURE WILL BE VICTORIOUS. The old times were times of darkness, fear, difficulty, and strife. Even yet we are not out of the noise of the battle, and perhaps a more fierce conflict is gathering. But beyond all these is the peace of Divine victory assured to the servants of Christ. This was anticipated by the exultant Galilæans, who spread palm branches before our Lord as he rode up to Jerusalem. Now, the vision of the palm trees should encourage patience and inspire energy. A splendid future is before us; let us, then, press on with undimmed hope. 1. The palm tree is *lofty*. It shoots straight up and towers above the plain, a graceful and a conspicuous object. The happy future will be exalted and heavenly. 2. The palm tree *bears all its fruit on its summit*. It is a high, bare pillar, crowned with fruit and foliage. Men must

climb to reach its treasures. The victory of Christian experience is not for those who grovel in earthly-mindedness. 3. The palm *flourishes in the desert.* It is the one fruitful tree of the desert. The victory of Christ over Satan was obtained amidst outward darkness and despair. His future victory over all evil may be among discouraging external signs. We need not despair of the human desert if the palm of Christ is there. 4. The palm tree *requires water for its nourishment.* It will not grow in the sandy wastes of the Sahara. The victory of Christianity depends on hidden supplies of the water of life.

II. THE VICTORY OF THE FUTURE WILL BE DIVINE. The palm tree is in the temple, planted among the heavenly cherubim. It is a bit of nature surrounded with things never found in nature. Christ's kingdom grows upon earth. The people of God are to flourish like the palm tree (Ps. xcii. 12). But this prosperity is no mere natural growth of wild humanity; neither is it the cultivated product of secular education. The palm tree is not in the well-pruned and tended garden, but in the temple. It is through religion that we are led on by Christ to victory. 1. There is the *conquest of evil.* The palm tree is planted by the place of sacrifices—in the temple. We can only hope for a good future when the wrongs and sins of mankind, which are its greatest evils, are overcome. 2. There is *dedication to God.* The palm tree grows in a holy place. We must be devoted to God if we would enjoy his smile and favour. The highest glory will crown the work of the most devoted servant of Christ. At the monastery of Mar Saba, in the wilderness of the Dead Sea, a palm tree grows on a shelf of the rock high up a wild, barren cliff, and yet flourishes there and bears fruit, because—as the monks say—it springs from a date-stone sown by the saint who founded the monastery. True saints will grow palms of victory from the hardest lives.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 4.—"*The most holy place.*" Holiness is an idea which admits of gradual precision and elevation. There is a very simple and primitive meaning of the term, which it would ill become us to despise and ridicule, inasmuch as it was preliminary and preparatory to a more spiritual conception. At the same time, we should do discredit to our Christian training did we not strive to rise to a higher and nobler conception of holiness than that which obtained among, and was sufficient for, a people in an early stage of spiritual culture. In the temple at Jerusalem there was a holy place, and a holy of holies, or, in the language of Ezekiel, the most holy place. An effort may be made to reach and to explain the several ideas which together made up the peculiar sanctity of the *adytum* of the Jewish temple.

I. THE PRIMITIVE SIGNIFICATION OF HOLINESS IS SEPARATION, AND THE MOST HOLY PLACE WAS ONE MARKED OFF AND SET APART FROM ALL AROUND. A purpose was served by the distinction between the sacred and the profane—a distinction which may, in the highest stage of spiritual culture, be transcended. Men have to be taught by their senses; and the separation of a certain spot, a certain building, a certain portion of a building, from all around, contributes to the formation of the idea of sanctity. This might not be necessary in a world where no sin exists; but in this world, where sin has reigned, and where sin still so largely prevails, the evil has impressed itself on men's minds as *normal*, and the pure and Divine as *exceptional.* Hence the consecration of sites, and temples, oracles, and holy places.

II. THE MOST HOLY PLACE SERVED TO EDUCATE THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN MORALITY AND IN TRUE RELIGION. The whole ceremonial and sacrificial dispensation established by Moses, with all the observances of the Levitical Law, may justly be regarded as instructive and disciplinary, in the first place for Israel, and then for all mankind. Those who looked upon the temple and its sanctuary could not but be reminded that here was the peculiar dwelling-place of a holy God. The degrees of holiness attaching to the several parts of the sacred edifice, culminating in the sanctity of the most holy place, were fitted to elicit the spiritual apprehensions, the reverence, the devotion, the penitence, of those who felt themselves in the presence and under the training of the all-holy God. To a certain extent every Israelite not specially disqualified might draw

near to Jehovah; the priests were suffered and required to approach still nearer to the shrine; but the high priest alone was permitted, and that only upon a special occasion, to enter the most holy place. Such arrangements and provisions were admirably adapted to educate the Jewish people in the idea and in the practice of holiness.

III. RECONCILIATION BETWEEN A SINFUL NATION AND A JUST AND PURE GOD WAS EFFECTED THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF THE MOST HOLY PLACE. In the holy of holies was performed the especially solemn and sacred service in which, upon the Day of Atonement, the high priest alone was suffered to take part as the representative of the people of the covenant. On that occasion the federal relation of Israel was conspicuously set forth. To the pious Jew the contents of the holy of holies, the vestments of the officiating high priest, the blood of atonement, must all have possessed a very special and very sacred interest. And that interest centred in the idea of reconciliation between Jehovah and the chosen nation—reconciliation rendered necessary by the sins of the people, and by the perfectly holy character, the perfectly righteous government, of God. Consecrated to this use, the inmost sanctuary was naturally invested with a sacredness altogether unique.

IV. THE MOST HOLY PLACE BECAME ASSOCIATED WITH COMMUNION BETWEEN ISRAEL AND ISRAEL'S GOD. Reconciliation naturally led to fellowship. The enlightened Jews doubtless took a spiritual view of the Divine presence, and sympathized with the sublime language of Solomon at the dedication of the temple: "Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!" Still, it was by means of this temple, its priesthood and its services, that the Jewish nation generally were, by Divine appointment and intention, made familiar with the possibility and privilege of fellowship with the Eternal. It was inculcated upon them that such communion was only possible in virtue of the condescension and compassion of the Most High, and that there was needed on their part, in order to the enjoyment of the privilege, a peculiar preparation, a spiritual cleansing. The thoughtful and devout Jew learned, by means of the temple services, to form such an idea of God as led him to seek a spiritual discipline. He knew that the sacrifices in themselves were insufficient, and that the sacrifices required by the Searcher of hearts were spiritual, consisting in humility, penitence, faith, and obedience. Those thus prepared might draw near unto God, and God would draw near unto them.

V. THE MOST HOLY PLACE, AS THE SCENE OF HIGH PRIESTLY MEDIATION, SYMBOLIZES THE MEDIATORIAL WORK OF CHRIST. In order to understand the symbolical, and indeed typical, character of the holy of holies, and of the ministration therein performed by the Jewish high priest, it is important to study the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In that portion of Scripture is an authoritative and lucid explanation of the spiritual meaning of the central scenes and observances of the Jewish economy. It is shown that the shadow was in Christ superseded by the substance, and that in the new and spiritual dispensation we have the fulfilment of ancient promise. The transactions which, on the great Day of Atonement, took place within the holy of holies prefigured and adumbrated the great events by which, not Israel only, but humanity as a whole, was reconciled to God. For when Christ expired upon the cross the veil of the temple was rent in twain; and thenceforth, through the rent veil of Christ's humanity, the way into the holiest of all was opened up; the alienation of the human race from God was abolished; and perpetual communion was provided between a gracious Father and his restored and accepted children. The most holy place into which through Christ we have access is nothing else than the favour, the fellowship, the love of God.—T.

Ver. 22.—"*The table that is before the Lord.*" There can be no question that by this table Ezekiel intends the altar of incense, which stood in the holy place, but which, on account of its sacredness and value, is mentioned by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews as part of the furniture of the holy of holies. This altar in the tabernacle was of acacia wood covered with gold; that in the temple of Solomon was of cedar wood covered with the same pure and costly metal. Upon this table was burned, every morning and evening, the incense which represented the devotions of Israel. Upon the day of atonement the horns of the altar of incense were touched with the blood of

sacrifice. But as no sacrifice, in the strict meaning of that term, was offered upon it it seems appropriately designated "the table that is before the Lord." Remembering the symbolical intention of the offering of incense as described in the Apocalypse, we cannot fail to understand by this table the appointment that prayer and praise, as an acceptable offering to God, should ever be presented by the Church through the priestly mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. A SPIRITUAL OFFERING. The costly and fragrant incense had value in the sight of God, as representing the spiritual sacrifices with which he is ever well pleased. Prayer is not only natural to man as a needy and dependent being; it is enjoined by God as an exercise profitable to man and as the wisely ordained means of securing spiritual and promised blessings. Thanksgiving and praise are becoming to those who are ever receiving from Heaven more than they desire or deserve. We are not to understand merely verbal offerings, but those which proceed from a devout, grateful, confiding, and affectionate heart.

II. AN APPOINTED OFFERING. In the thirtieth chapter of Exodus we find minute directions concerning the presentation as well as the preparation of incense. This service was not an invention of man; it was prescribed by Divine authority. In the Church it is God's will that there should be constant presentation of devotion—"incense and a pure offering." From the altar of Christian hearts such sacrifices are to ascend to heaven. God will be "inquired of" by his people. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth God."

III. AN ACCEPTABLE OFFERING. We have abundant testimony in Scripture to the Lord's indifference to the merely material gifts of men. If such gifts are not the expression of faith and loyalty, he disdains and rejects them. But, on the other hand, nothing is more clearly revealed in Scripture than the delight of the Supreme in the offering of true and loving and reverent hearts. This is a "sweet-smelling savour" to him.

"Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
Vainly with gifts would his favour secure;
Sweeter by far is the heart's adoration,
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor."

IV. A PERPETUAL OFFERING. Incense was offered by the Jewish priest daily—every morning and every evening. Not less frequent should be the offering of prayer and praise by God's people—in the Church and in the home, above all in the heart. There is no cessation of God's favours; there should be no cessation of our thanksgivings. There is no intermission of our needs; there should be no interruption of our prayers. "Pray without ceasing."

V. A HEAVENLY OFFERING. It is observable that the one altar mentioned in the Book of the Revelation as existing in the celestial temple is the altar of incense. The purpose of sacrifice is answered and accomplished upon earth. There remains no more offering for sin. In heaven, accordingly, is no altar of sacrifice. But the altar of incense is imperishable. From it ascend immortally the praises and the prayers of the redeemed and glorified. In heaven fellowship with God is never suspended; there harps are never unstrung and voices are never silent.—T.

Ver. 4.—*Sacred places.* "This is the most holy place." There has always dwelt in the minds of men a feeling that some places are peculiarly sacred. Unfortunately, there has been no small amount of superstition connected with this feeling, which should be discouraged in others and should be resisted in our own case. We should strongly insist upon the truth, and carefully cultivate the conviction, that if some places have a peculiar sanctity, it is that "*every* place may be holy ground" to us; that we may find God everywhere and in everything; that we may worship and serve him in every sphere and on all occasions whatsoever. Still, the feeling rests on a basis of truth. We know that there was a "most holy place"—

I. IN THE ANCIENT TEMPLE. Within the veil was "the holy of holies," into which none but the high priest might enter, and he only once a year, and then only with the blood of the slain goat. God might only be approached by men as they were purified from sin; and this the careful graduation of access to him clearly symbolized. That inner chamber of the temple was the most sacred spot on earth, because there God manifested his presence as nowhere else. But there were very holy places indeed—

II. IN THE LIFE OF OUR LORD. He was the living Temple when he was with us; for was not God manifest in him far more truly and importantly than he was present "between the cherubim" in the luminous cloud? There were three places which, in the experience of Jesus Christ, may be said to be "most holy"—the upper room in Jerusalem, where he "sat down with the twelve" to that sacred meal, and delivered that discourse of priceless value to mankind (John xiv.); the garden of Gethsemane, where he passed through the great agony; and the "place which is called Calvary," where the great sacrifice was offered for the sins of the world.

III. IN OUR OWN BUILDINGS NOW. We find such in those sanctuaries or in those chambers which are closely associated with our converse with the Most High. Apart from and independent of any act of formal "consecration," the place where we gather together to worship God, the place where we hold holy and happy fellowship with Christ, the place where we listen with eager mind and fervent spirit to his Divine truth,—this is hallowed ground to us; these are sacred spots which we tread reverently, where we feel near to God, which will always be peculiarly dear to our hearts.

IV. IN OUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCE. There are certain very solemn and sacred experiences through which the God of our life "makes us to pass," of which we may truly say that they are "most holy." Of these we have instances in: 1. The time of separation, of loneliness, when we first find ourselves cast upon God for guidance and for fellowship. 2. The day of desperate grief, of overwhelming sorrow, when men can do nothing for us, but God everything. 3. The hour of very special privilege, when we feel the nearness of Christ, the excellency of his salvation, the power of the world to come, the influence of the Holy Spirit; when we feel that we stand before the open gate of the kingdom of God. 4. The occasion of great opportunity, when it is in our power to make some great sacrifice for others or to render some valuable service to them or to speak faithfully and effectively for Jesus Christ.—C.

Vers. 18—20, 25.—*The significance of the cherubim.* Among the difficulties that attend this question, it seems clear that these composite forms were intended either to represent the human or the angelic, *not* the Divine. The idea of any artistic representation of the Divine Being in a Hebrew temple is surely quite inadmissible (see Deut. iv. 15—17). Making our choice, then, between the human and the angelic, we distinctly prefer the former, and think that the general idea is that man, when raised to the highest conceivable condition, when possessed of the greatest variety of powers, should bring everything he has and is to the worship and service of God. The fact that, in Ezekiel's vision, the cherubim had so large a share in the ornamentation, "made through all the house round about," suggests the very close connection there should be between the finest and highest powers of man and the worship of God. In other places (see ch. i.) we have a far fuller description of these "living ones," and there we have the idea not only of "peerless strength and majesty" suggested by the "face of a young lion" (ver. 19), but also of patient, productive labour (the ox), and of penetrating vision (the eagle); while the thought of swift motion is conveyed both by the wings and the wheels of the prophet's former vision. Conceive man at his very best, endowed generally with such powers as he is never or rarely possessed of now; add to those capacities which he does enjoy those which are borrowed from other non-human spheres; and as he would then be, thus invested, thus enlarged and crowned, the fitting thing would be for him to be found in the temple, blessing and praising God. This is so, in several aspects and for many reasons.

I. IT IS HIS MOST SACRED AND BOUNDEN DUTY. For however high in dignity man may rise, and to whatever commanding faculty he may attain, it is certain that: 1. He will always owe everything he may be or may possess to the creative power of God, and that: 2. He will be dependent on the providential goodness of God for their continuance. Thus gratitude and hope should bring him to the sanctuary, to bless God for bestowing them upon him, and to ask him to sustain and to enlarge them.

II. IT IS HIS TRUEST AND HIGHEST HONOUR. There are many engagements by which man does some honour to his human nature; *e.g.* conversing, reading, discussing, meditating, planning, learning, executing works of art, composing works of literature, etc. But never does he confer such honour on himself as when he is worshipping God; then the life of the "living one" reaches its very highest point. To come con-

sciously into the near presence of God, to hold communion with the Eternal, to hymn his praise, to dwell in thought upon his nature and his high purposes, to speak his Divine truth or hear it, to work with him toward the gracious and glorious end he has in view,—there is nothing we can do, here or perhaps hereafter, so worthy of, so honourable to, our human nature. Man reaches the very summit of his manhood when he is engaged in worshipping God.

III. IT IS THE SOURCE OF THE PUREST AND MOST EXALTING JOY. Of all sources of delight, beginning with the sensuous and rising to the spiritual, there can be none purer or more ennobling than this.

IV. IT BRINGS DOWN A LARGE SHARE OF DIVINE BLESSING.—C.

Vers. 18—20, 25.—*The significance of the palm trees.* The cherubim and the palm trees were closely associated; both were largely represented, and they were found in close conjunction: "a palm tree was between a cherub and a cherub." Both of them pictured the righteous man in the sanctuary of God, but while the cherub signified the good man at his best bringing himself and all that he had as an offering to God, the palm tree stood for the good man as one who had been made what he was by the services of the sanctuary; the one was enlarged and ennobled humanity bringing its offering to God, the other was that same humanity gaining its goodness and worth from God and from his house. "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree," said the psalmist (Ps. xcii. 12). And there is very good reason why that tree should be taken as a type or picture of the righteous man; there is also excellent reason why the prominence of the palm tree in the prophet's vision should picture the truth that man's goodness is the fair and excellent result of much communion with God. Among the resemblances are these—

I. ITS UPRIGHTNESS. Some trees are irregular, they are twisted and tortuous in their growth; some hug the ground before they rise; but the palm rises straight toward heaven, it stands upright among the trees. "Like some *tall palm* the noiseless fabric grew." The good man is well figured here; he is the man who does not stoop, who does not bend and bow earthward, who stands erect, who moves in one heavenward direction, who is governed constantly by true and abiding principles. And these he gains from God and from his house. There, in the sanctuary, he is sustained in his principles, is reminded of them, gains fresh inspiration to illustrate and adorn them.

II. ITS FRUITFULNESS. The palm, as a fruit-bearing tree, bearing a fruit which is remarkably nutritious—for the date will sustain life for a long time, without any other kind of food—is an admirable picture of the righteous man. He bears fruit; he is expected to "bear *much* fruit," and fruit of many kinds: *excellency of spirit*,—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, etc.; *worthiness of life*,—consistency, blamelessness, practical kindness, etc.; *earnest effort* to do good,—patient, prayerful endeavour to awaken the slumbering, to elevate the fallen, to comfort the sorrowful, to encourage the feeble, etc. And if he does this, it can only be by having much to do with Jesus Christ his Lord. He must be a branch *abiding in the vine*; he must maintain a very close spiritual connection with Christ; and how shall he do this without the ordinances of his house?

III. ITS BEAUTY. The palm tree lends a great charm to the landscape when seen standing in clusters upon the heights against the sky; and its evergreen foliage makes each particular tree an object of beauty. The righteous man is he whose character is fair, excellent, admirable. When he is what his Master calls on him to be, and what he actually becomes when he seeks the strength and refreshment to be found in communion with God, then the more he is observed the more he is admired. Those qualities are found in him which are "lovely and of good report;" he is unselfish, pure, considerate, open-handed, patient, brave, loyal, loving. His goodness, like the foliage of the palm, grows not near the ground, where it can easily be soiled and lost, but high up, where lower things cannot damage or destroy it.

IV. ITS ELASTICITY. The fibre of the palm is so elastic that, even when loaded with considerable weights, it still grows determinately upwards (see Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible'). The good man may have much to depress him and to hamper his growth, but if he "dwells in the house of the Lord," he will rise, notwithstanding all that would otherwise check him, to a noble height of virtue and of piety.

V. ITS ULTIMATE TRIUMPH. It does not promise much at the beginning. "It is rough to the touch and enveloped in dry bark, but above it is adorned with fruit . . . so is the life of the elect, despised below, beautiful above; . . . down below straitened by innumerable afflictions, but on high it is expanded into a foliage . . . of beautiful greenness" (see 2 Cor. iv. 17; Heb. xii. 11).—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLII.

This chapter furnishes a brief account of the priests' chambers in the outer court (vers. 1—14), and a detailed measurement of the temple precincts (vers. 15—20).

Vers. 1—14.—*The priests' chambers.*

Ver. 1.—The survey of the house having been completed, the seer was conducted by his guide into the outer court (see on ch. xl. 17), by the way toward the north, *i.e.* by the inner north gate (see ch. xl. 23), and from the outer court into **the chamber that was over against the separate place, and which was before the building toward the north.** That this chamber, or these chambers (לִשְׁכָּה being a collective noun, though in vers. 4 and 5 it occurs in the plural), were not the same cells as those mentioned in ch. xl. 17, 44, as Hävernick supposes, is apparent from their situation and use. Those in ch. xl. 44 were in the inner, while these were in the outer; and if the cells spoken of in ch. xl. 17 were in the outer court, they were also on the pavement by the outer wall, while the chambers now alluded to were "over against," or *in front of*, the gizrah, or separate place (see on ch. xli. 12), and "over against," or *in front of*, "the building toward the north." This building Kiel, Hengstenberg, Schröder, and Plumptre hold to have been the erection on the gizrah; Ewald, Kliefoth, Smend, and Currey believe it to have meant the temple. The question as to which view is correct is immaterial, since the row of chambers extended in front of parts of both buildings. Ewald, as usual, follows the LXX., and translates, "brought me to the fifteen (another Greek text has five) cells;" but of this the Hebrew contains nothing.

Ver. 2.—With this verse the Authorized and Revised Versions begin a new sentence, and are in this at one with Smend; but the majority of expositors place the second verse under the regimen of the verb, "he brought me," in ver. 1, and understand the seer to state that he was planted down **before the length** (or, *long side*) **of an hundred cubits,** *with the door toward the north, and the breadth fifty cubits.* That is to say, the building which contained the sacristies, or priests' chambers, was a hundred cubits long and fifty broad. As the building on the separate place was also a hundred cubits long (ch. xli. 13), it might seem as if this erection ran exactly parallel to that, and this view is taken by Hengstenberg, Schröder, and Plumptre; but Kliefoth, Keil, and Currey, on the authority of ch. xlvi. 19, locate a priests' kitchen behind the priests' chambers towards the west, and reserve for it forty cubits, on the plausible ground that it would not likely be smaller in size than the sacrificial kitchen for the people (see ch. xlvi. 22). Hence, if the building under consideration began forty cubits east of the gizrah wall, it would extend twenty cubits over the end and along the length of the temple.

Ver. 3.—Considerable difficulty attaches to the words of this verse. **The twenty cubits which were for the inner court** (better, *the twenty which belonged to the inner court*) have been taken by Kliefoth to signify the watchers' cells in the inner court, west of the north door (ch. xl. 40—46), and by Plumptre to indicate an inner area of twenty cubits square, round which the galleries in three stories ran. Both of these views, however, have this against them, that they are purely conjectural, the text in ch. xl. 40—46 saying nothing about twenty cubits in connection with the priests' chambers, and the text under review making no suggestion of an inner area of twenty cubits, but only of the already well-known "inner court." Hence the opinion of Ewald, Hengstenberg, Keil, Schröder, and Currey has most in its favour, that the "twenty" alongside of which the chamber now alluded to lay, meant the twenty cubits clear space which surrounded the temple on the south, west, and north sides (see ch. xli. 12—14), and which could properly be spoken of as "for the inner court," rather as "belonging to the inner court," since it was practically a continuation of the same. **The pavement which was for** (or, *belonged to*) **the outer court,** was manifestly that already described as running along the inside of the outer wall (see ch. xl. 17). If, as is likely, this pavement was continued along the north side of the inner court wall, then the priests' chambers must have stood upon it, and been over against it on the east side, as Currey explains; but the easier and more natural supposition is that adopted by Keil,

that the second "over against" points to that which faced the chambers on the north, viz. the pavement, as the first marked their boundary on the south. **Gallery against gallery** (see on ch. xli. 15). **In three stories**; or, *in the third story* (Revised Version). Whether these galleries existed in each of three stories of the building, or only in the third, cannot be determined. If בְּשְׁלֹשִׁים, "in the thirds" occurs elsewhere only in Gen. vi. 16, to denote the chambers or rooms of the third story in the ark, as Smend observes, "the expression might also quite naturally signify three stories, one above another."

Ver. 4.—**Before the chambers a walk.** Whether this walk ran along the longer, *i.e.* northern, or in front of the eastern side of the chambers, and how it stood related to the way, which is likewise mentioned in connection with the chambers, are litigated questions. The LXX. identifies the two, and understands a way in front of the chambers of ten cubits broad and a hundred cubits long. Ewald and Keil so far agree with the LXX. as to change the one-cubit way into a hundred-cubit way; but whereas Ewald thinks of a passage ten cubits broad and a hundred cubits long, running from west to east between two sets of chambers, Keil speaks of a *walk* of ten cubits broad and a hundred cubits long in front of the cells, extending into a *way* of equal breadth and length, leading westward into the inner court. Hävernick's, Hengstenberg's, and Kliefoth's idea, favoured by Schröder, and probably the best, is that of a *walk* of ten cubits in front of the cells, and a *way* of one cubit leading into them from the walk. Dr. Currey reverses this, and makes a *walk* of ten cubits leading inward, and a *way*, or kerb, of one cubit in front. Plumptre agrees that the passage leading into the chambers was ten cubits broad, but regards the one cubit as denoting the thickness of the wall separating the *walk* from the interior of the chambers.

Ver. 5.—The rendering of the Revised Version sufficiently explains this otherwise obscure verse, "Now the upper chambers were shorter," or narrower, "for the galleries took away from these;" literally, *did eat of them*, "more than from the lower and the middlemost in the building." In other words, the chambers rose in terrace form, each of the upper stories receding from that below it, as was customary in Babylonian architecture.

Ver. 6 supplies the reason for this shortening of the upper stories. The chambers had not pillars (see on ch. xl. 49) as the courts had. Though it is not otherwise stated, these appear to have had colonnades like those in the Herodian (Josephus, 'Ant.,' xv. 11. 5) and probably also the Solomonic temple (Acts iii. 11); and hence the second and third stories required to recede in order to find supports for their respective galleries.

Ver. 7.—**The wall**; or, *fence*—the Hebrew term being not חֹמָה, as in ch. xl. 5, or קִיר, as in ch. xli. 5, both of which signify the wall of a city or a building, but גָּדֵר (or גָּדֵר, as in ver. 10), which means a fence or hedge, as in ch. xiii. 5—**without, over against**—or, *by the side of* (Revised Version) — **the chambers, toward the outer court**, cannot have been a rampart along the north side of the chambers, since this was a hundred cubits long, but must have been a wall upon the side of the chambers (east or west) fencing off the outer court from the passage which led down by the side of the chambers. That this fence was on the east side is rendered probable by the circumstance that the sacrificial kitchen lay upon the west (see ch. xlvi. 19, 20), and by the statements which follow in vers. 8 and 9. The fence was doubtless intended to screen the side windows of the lower chambers from public gaze, since these were to be occupied as robing and disrobing rooms for the priests who should officiate in the temple (see ver. 14; and ch. xliv. 19).

Ver. 8.—According to the statement contained in this verse, **the chambers that were in the outer court**, *i.e.* the chambers whose windows looked into the outer court, projected fifty cubits into the outer court; *i.e.* this was their breadth or depth from north to south; whereas those **before the temple were an hundred cubits**; *i.e.* the chambers whose windows fronted the temple, were a hundred cubits from east to west.

Ver. 9.—The chambers were approached by an entry (in the text the entry, this being a well-known and recognized part of the structure) which ran along the east side of the building, and led from the outer to the temple court. As this (the outer) court was higher than that (the temple), and could only be reached by steps, the "entry" is represented as lying under the chambers. It was manifestly this "entry" that was screened by the fence mentioned in ver. 7.

Vers. 10—12.—A similar suite of chambers, corresponding in every detail, is depicted as having stood upon the south side of the temple and in front of the gizrah. The only question among interpreters is whether ver. 10 relates to the north or south suite, or to an east suite. Schröder and Currey see in ver. 10 a repetition, from another point of view, of what has already been stated about the north chambers, viz. that, viewed from the outer court, they appeared in the thickness or breadth of the

wall (ver. 7) and (lengthwise) over against the separate place and the buildings, *i.e.* the gizrah and the temple. Ewald, Smend, and Keil decide that ver. 10 forms part of the description of a south set of chambers only; but in order to make this good they alter the text by substituting תֵּימָנָה, "the south," for קָדִימָה, "the east." Plumptre agrees with Kliefoth and Hengstenberg in holding that two similar sets of chambers are described, one on the east side, and one on the south side of the inner court wall. The principal objection to this is the fact that only two suites, the north and the south, are referred to by the guide in vers. 13 and 14.

Vers. 13, 14.—These state the uses of the chambers just described, and now named **holy chambers**, to denote their separation and dedication to sacred purposes. Those purposes, again, are defined as two. The chambers were to serve as dining-halls and robing rooms for the priests when they officiated in the temple. **The most holy things**; literally, *the holy of the holies* (comp. ch. xli. 4; xliii. 12; xlv. 3; xlviii. 12; Lev. ii. 3; vi. 17, 25, 29; vii. 1, 6; x. 12, 17; xiv. 13; xxiv. 9; xxvii. 28; Numb. xviii. 9), signified those portions of the different sacrificial offerings which were to be eaten by the priests as the servants and representatives of Jehovah (see Keil's 'Biblische Archäologie,' i. § 46) or of the people (see Kurtz's 'Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament,' p. 240, Eng. transl.). Under the Law these were appointed to be eaten in the holy place beside the altar (Lev. x. 12, 13; Numb. xviii. 10); in Ezekiel's temple, a special quarter in the near vicinity of the house should be reserved for this purpose. There those portions of the sacrifices that could be eaten were to be consumed; as *e.g.* the flesh of the sin and trespass offerings, and the meal of the meat offering; but as these could not be at once used, they were to be deposited there until they were prepared for eating, the flesh by being boiled and the meal by being mixed with oil. The obvious intention of this was to convey an idea of the special sanctity of the worship in which the priests were engaged; and just for this reason also they were required to array themselves in **other garments** (Lev. xvi. 23) when they entered on their priestly functions. The putting on and off of these holy clothes took place in the chambers now referred to.

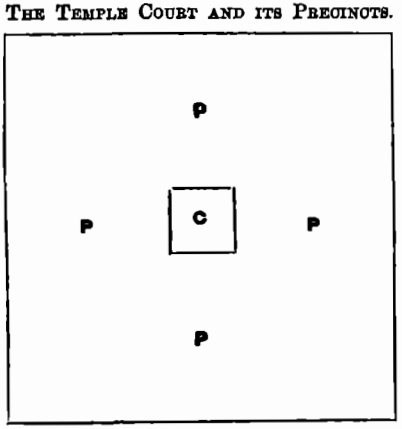
Vers. 15—20.—*The temple precincts.* The seer's guide, having completed his measurement of the house with its courts, proceeds to measure its encompassing wall, for this purpose conducting the prophet out by the east gate, and measuring, first the east, next the north, thirdly the south, and lastly the west wall, each **five hundred** reeds in length, or three thousand cubits, so that the entire area of the quadrangle amounted to 3000 × 3000 = 9,000,000 square cubits, equivalent to 2,250,000 square yards.

Ver. 15.—**The inner house** was not the temple as distinguished from its courts, but the temple with its courts, which lay within the wall about to be measured.

Ver. 16.—**Five hundred reeds.** Ewald, Hitzig, and Smend, with others, following the LXX., regard this wall as that of the outer court, and change the "reeds" into "cubits;" but the majority of expositors adhere to the text, and understand the wall to be that of a great quadrangle which encompassed the whole structure, or the outer court and all within.

Ver. 20.—**To make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane.** In these words the prophet indicates the purpose designed to be served by this particular wall; and although it may be said the outer court divided between the "sanctuary," or *that which was holy*, and the "profane," *or that which was common*, yet a more decided separation would assuredly

THE TEMPLE COURT AND ITS PRECINCTS.

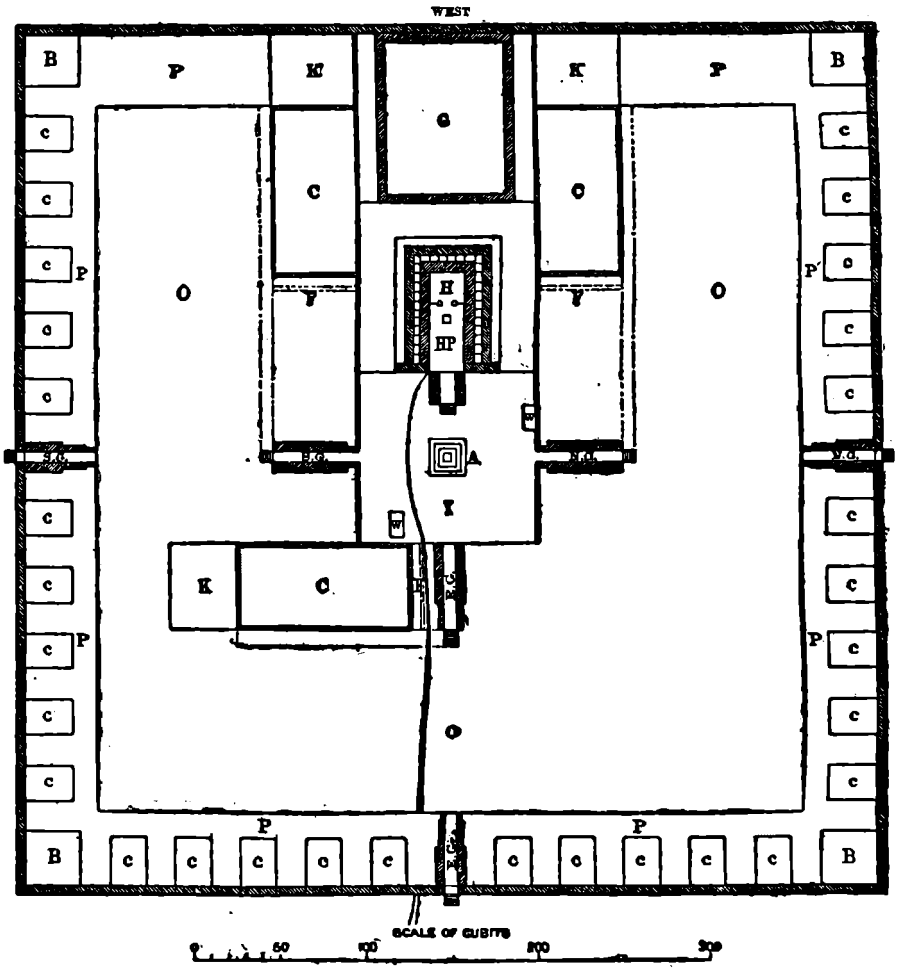


C, the temple court, 500 cubits square; P, the temple precincts, 3000 cubits square.

be made by extending in the way described the precincts of the house. The objections usually offered to the view which regards the present measurements as those of a larger quadrangle encompassing the outer court, are not sufficient to make that view impossible. (1) It is said that the "sanctuary" always refers to the house as contrasted with its courts, especially with the

outer court, and that in this sense it should here be taken; but the rendering, "that which is holy," shows how the idea of special sanctity might easily be extended to the whole structure, including courts as well as house (see Ps. cxiv. 2; Dan. ix. 20). (2) It is urged that there is no other instance in which the measurements are represented as having been taken by "reeds" in the plural; but a glance at ch. xlv. 1, etc., and xlviii. 16, will show that this is incorrect. (3) It is represented that in the centre of such a huge quadrangle the house, with its courts and gates, would wear an insignificant appearance; but, while this might have been so had the area been crowded with other buildings, it is rather likely that in the midst of so large a vacant space the temple and its courts stand out with increased clearness, if not with augmented size. (4) It is added that the summit of Mount Moriah could not admit of the construction of such a vast quadrangle; and it is answered that this shows the temple was an ideal house, never meant to be built upon the literal Moriah.

GROUND PLAN OF TEMPLE.



N. G., etc., gateways; O, outer court; P, pavement; K, cooking-chambers for the priests; B, boiling-houses for the people; c, chambers on the pavement; G, the gizrah; C, priests' chambers; F, fence; I, inner court; E. G., N. G., S. G., gates; A, altar of sacrifice; W, watchers' chambers; H P and H, the house.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—*The outer court.* There was an outer court in the temple of Jerusalem, held to be less sacred than the courts nearer to the holy place; to this court Gentiles were admitted.

I. THERE IS AN OUTER COURT IN ALL RELIGION. There are always people who seem to stand midway between the Church and the world. In some cases they are like Elijah's contemporaries, halting between two opinions (1 Kings xviii. 21). They may be described as like the scribe who was "not far from the kingdom of God" (Mark xii. 34). Feeling a certain attraction for religion, they are drawn into association with public worship. Others, like the money-changers and cattle-vendors whom our Lord disturbed, find it possible to make worldly profit for themselves by hanging on to the fringe of religious ordinances.

II. THEY WHO ARE IN THE OUTER COURT ENJOY CERTAIN PRIVILEGES. These people can see what is going on in the more sacred interior of the temple. Though they take no part in the services, they are able to witness the sacrificial rites. Similarly, there are regular attendants at Christian churches who do not enter into the more intimate life of the community nor enjoy its highest advantages. Yet they have some privileges. It is something to see the door, if we have not yet knocked at it. Knowing the way ought to be a preparation for entering it. In a professedly Christian country, where New Testament facts are familiar to most people, and where few are quite out of the range of potential religious influences, privileges are enjoyed which bring a responsibility not shared by the more ignorant heathen.

III. THEY WHO ARE IN THE OUTER COURT MISS THE BEST BLESSING. At most they have Esau's blessing, not Jacob's. Like Balaam, they see the Christ, but "not near;" therefore, like that unhappy prophet of Moab, they must be excluded from the covenant of promise. It is an aggravation to the torment of Dives that he can see Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. The knowledge of Christian truth and the sight of Christian grace do not save the souls of men who will not yield themselves to Christ in heart and life. We have to beware of a common snare. Many are tempted to believe that they are safe because they are in some sort of external association with religion. We need to understand distinctly that this will not avail. There must be personal membership in the kingdom of heaven for all who will enjoy the real blessings of the kingdom.

IV. IT IS NOW POSSIBLE FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN THE OUTER COURT TO ENTER THE INNER COURT. This was even true of the old, narrow Jewish religion, on the condition that the Gentile proselyte was circumcised and became a Jew. It is certainly true of the free, world-wide Christian gospel. None need linger in the outer court. There is room within the privileged Church for every soul on earth, and a welcome from Christ for all who will come. But observe, in conclusion, the distinction between outer and inner courts in the Christian Church is spiritual, not visible. Professed Church-members may be in the outer court; while those who join no earthly community, and are regarded by their brethren as religious Bohemians, are in the inner court if their hearts and lives are truly near to Christ.

Ver. 13.—*Holy places.* In a Protestant reaction against the superstition that attaches magical sanctity to certain sites, we have perhaps lost hold of the truths of which that superstition was a perversion.

I. THERE IS A SANCTITY OF ASSOCIATION. We may own to a revulsion for a man who would botanize on his mother's grave. Every Englishman must feel a thrill of national pride when he visits the field of Waterloo, as every Greek must have done when treading the plain of Marathon. Though a man may have travelled far and have acquired wealth that has raised him above his humble origin, it is but natural that he should look back to the cottage home of his childhood with tender affection as to the most sacred shrine on earth. It may be from superstition, or it may be from sentiment; but whichever be the cause, it is surely no strange thing to confess that the house of God in which a man has worshipped for years gathers to itself a peculiar consecration. There his burdened soul has been cheered; there the light has pierced his darkness; there he

has sat side by side with the loved and lost, and if the place that once knew them now knows them no more, does not the very sense of change and the very pain of the vacancy add a new sacredness to the place, while dear memories of a beautiful past cling to its very walls and drape them with a sweet, sad sanctity?

II. THERE IS A SANCTITY OF USE. The sacred chambers were to be used by the priests, and in them sacrificial meals were to be eaten. Thus the sanctity of sacred usage was to be attached to these rooms. The commonest thing becomes holy when it is consecrated to a holy purpose. The shop may be a temple, the counter an altar, and the wares sacrifices, when the business is carried on for the glory of God in quiet obedience to his will of righteousness. Thus the very bells on the horses may have "Holiness to the Lord" inscribed upon them. It is in this direction that we should move when we would abolish too narrow distinctions between the secular and the sacred. We should lose the distinction, not by making religion earthly, but by making earth religious; not by desecrating the spiritual functions, but by consecrating things of the outer world.

III. THERE IS A SANCTITY OF LIFE. This is the only true sanctity. The other forms of sanctity are its reflections and results. True holiness resides in the heart, and there alone. That is the holy place in which the holy man dwells. The presence of the priest sanctifies the temple-chambers. But it is not the "linen ephod" or any badge of office that makes the true priest. Every man who has habitual access to the presence of God is a true priest of God. He who walks with God treads holy ground. A halo of sanctity surrounds the heavenly life. Whether this life be spent in a temple court, a hermit's cell, a Christian home, or in the hard, fierce world, it is encircled with holiness, and it weaves about it its own sacred tabernacle.

Ver. 14.—*Holy garments.* The priests were to keep their holy garments in their holy chambers, wearing them in the sacred offices of the temple, and exchanging them for their common clothing before mixing with the people. This regulation was a necessary part of the Old Testament ceremonial, with its suggestions of separateness and external holiness. But it was susceptible of abuse, and some of the modern reproductions of it are certainly far from being commendable.

I. THE ANCIENT SIGNIFICANCE OF HOLY GARMENTS. 1. *The necessity of holiness in all worship.* God must be worshipped with clean hands and a pure heart—"in the beauty of holiness" (Ps. xcvi. 9). The old heathenish divorce of religion from morality could not be permitted under the Jewish economy. All that was most formal and external was intended to keep before the minds of the worshippers a clear perception of God's horror of sin, and a vivid presentation of his supreme love for righteousness. 2. *The experience of holiness by individual men.* Not only were the chambers in which the priests ate the sacrificial meals to be holy, but even the garments worn by the priests were also to be sacred. The sanctity attaches to the person. The very bodies of Christian people are temples of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. vi. 19). 3. *The renewal of holiness in every act of worship.* It is necessary to see that we are in a fit condition to approach God. It is not sufficient that we were once pardoned and cleansed. Unhappily, fresh defilement is repeatedly contracted. It is therefore necessary that renewed cleansing should be received. This was suggested by Christ's washing his disciples' feet (John xiii. 4—10). By Christ we can be fitted for entering the presence of God.

II. THE COMMON ABUSE OF HOLY GARMENTS. 1. *In distinction of persons.* The priest in his robes appeared as a more holy man than the common worshipper in his every-day dress. This was inevitable under the old Jewish system, but it should not be permitted in the present day. Yet what is called "the cloth" is often supposed to carry a certain sanctity, and clerical attire is thought by the superstitious to mark a spiritual separateness. But no such separateness exists in the Christian Church, all the members of which constitute "an holy priesthood" (1 Pet. ii. 5). 2. *By observing seasons.* The priests wore their holy garments for a time, and then laid them aside and assumed their ordinary apparel. Some people put on their religion as they put on their Sunday clothes. They are saints at church, and sinners in the world; holy on Sunday, and profane on the week-days. This is all delusive. No man can live two honest lives. Religion claims our whole being and time. For the true Christian all days are sacred

to Christ's service. 3. *With mere external profession.* The holiness resides only in the garment; the religion is nothing better than a clothing—it is no inspiration. Such religion, like that of the Pharisees who cleansed the outside of the cup and platter, is hypocrisy.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 13, 14.—*Sacerdotal sanctity.* If the Jews were a peculiar, a consecrated, a holy people, it may be said that their sanctity was concentrated in the temple—the building which was "holiness unto the Lord," and in the holy priesthood, set apart for the ministrations of the sanctuary. The angel who showed Ezekiel the temple of vision laid great stress upon this characteristic of the marvellous and symmetrical building.

I. CEREMONIAL HOLINESS. This is exhibited as affecting: 1. The *priests*, who were set apart from the rest of the people. How should they be clean who bear the vessels of the Lord! 2. Their *residences.* During the period of their officiation in the temple services and sacrifices, they had their dwelling in certain chambers within the precincts, and these chambers were deemed holy places. 3. Their *food.* They are said to "eat the most holy things;" *i.e.* there were certain regulations as to food which were prescribed for them that had no reference to the people generally. 4. Their *garments.* The priests were provided with raiment which they were required to wear when ministering before the Lord. Holy functions necessitated holy vestments. 5. Their *offerings.* As the reader of this passage is reminded, it was the duty of the priests to present meal offerings, sin offerings, and guilt offerings. As these were offered upon the holy altar to the holy God, they themselves were holy. It thus appears that everything connected with the position, the life, the ministrations, of the priests was marked by ceremonial sanctity.

II. THE SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CEREMONIAL HOLINESS. What was the purpose of all the arrangements described in this and other passages of Old Testament Scripture? Why was this artificial separation introduced into the religion and life of the Hebrew people? A complete answer to these questions is perhaps not possible. But it is evident that it was intended to convey to Israel and to mankind: 1. A conception of the *holy nature of God.* Very different was the character claimed for himself by Jehovah from the character attributed to the deities of the heathen nations around. Whilst these deities were disfigured by selfishness, cruelty, and lust, Jehovah's attributes were righteousness, holiness, and benevolence. Everything connected with the worship of God, as practised in the temple at Jerusalem, was adapted to convey to men's minds the idea of God's infinite and spotless holiness. 2. A conception of the *holy character of acceptable worship.* Concerning idolatrous worship, we know that it was distinguished by perfunctoriness and superstition, and in some cases by impurity. Religious rites among the heathen are usually corrupt, or else mechanical and spiritually valueless. On the contrary, the worship of the true Hebrew, as is evident to the attentive reader of the Book of Psalms and of the prophets, was a sincere, holy, and spiritual worship. It was well understood that no other worship could be acceptable to the holy and heart-searching King of kings. And the arrangements described in this passage of the Book of Ezekiel were evidently adapted to produce and to deepen this impression. 3. A conception of the *holy services of obedience and praise.* Sacrifices were enjoined and required of the pious Hebrew; but sacrifices were not the only or the chief services to be presented by the devout worshipper. In connection with these, and beyond these, were the offerings which God ever delights to accept from his own people—spiritual offerings of devotion and of active services. And if these are distinguished by one characteristic above another, that characteristic is true holiness.—T.

Vers. 15—19.—*The symmetry of the sanctuary.* The measurements which are in this part of Ezekiel's prophecies given with such abundance and such minuteness are intended primarily to convey the impression that the temple which was seen in vision was a building of perfect beauty, harmony, and completeness. But the material building was a figure of a spiritual edifice, and the material qualities ascribed to it

were significant of moral attributes of the profoundest interest. And the structure, made without hands, yet possessing every quality that can command admiration and reverence, is none other than the Church of the living God.

I. THE SYMMETRY OF THE CHURCH FOLLOWS FROM ITS BEING PLANNED BY GOD'S WISDOM. The tabernacle was constructed according to the pattern shown by God to Moses in the mount. The plan and details of Solomon's temple are attributed to Divine inspiration. And the Church of Christ is in the New Testament compared to the temple, with its Divine foundation, its ample precincts, its spiritual sacrifices, its accepted worshippers. All the productions of the Divine mind are perfect. When God looks upon his works he pronounces them to be "very good." Upon the Church, as upon what possesses a higher interest and value than aught material, Divine wisdom has expended all its resources. And the perfectly symmetrical product is just what might be expected. In God's mind the spiritual temple is faultlessly perfect; and the actual Church is destined to realize the glorious ideal.

II. THE SYMMETRY OF THE CHURCH RESULTS FROM ITS CONSTRUCTION UPON THE MODEL OF CHRIST HIMSELF. The humanity of the Lord Jesus was the temple of God. And when he departed from earth he left his representative in the Church which he redeemed and sanctified, and which he appointed to continue in his stead unto the end of time. The temple of his body was succeeded by the spiritual temple, built up of loyal and living souls. If Christ contained within himself, if Christ exhibited in his life, every moral perfection, it is manifest that the Church, which is his body, must perpetuate the spiritual excellences which existed in himself.

III. THE SYMMETRY OF THE CHURCH IS WROUGHT BY THE INSPIRATION AND GOVERNMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. There is a Divine presence in the Church, which, so far from being merely passive, is vital, energetic, and transforming. Who has not admired the action of certain physical and vital principles which produce the marvellous symmetry of crystals, and the yet more marvellous symmetry of every form of vegetable and animal life? What takes place in the natural kingdom is transcended by what occurs in the spiritual realm, although these results are not in the same way apparent to the senses of the observer, and appeal rather to his spiritual discernment and susceptibilities. But the provision for the growth and prosperity of Christ's Church, the provision for ministers and officers, for co-operation and sympathy in Church worship and Church work, all tell of a Spirit informing, inspiring, and directing the whole, and producing a result of marvellous and admirable harmony and spiritual beauty.

IV. THE SYMMETRY OF THE CHURCH WILL REACH ITS FULL AND PERFECT DEVELOPMENT IN THE HEAVENLY STATE. Who can read this portion of Ezekiel's prophecies, and the corresponding chapters from the Book of the Revelation, without forming the conviction that, however this world may be the scene of the Church's discipline, the scene of the Church's maturity is elsewhere, is above? The heavenly temple is, in glory and beauty, faintly imaged by the Church militant on earth. Yonder all imperfections shall be removed, all deficiencies shall be supplied, all holy tendencies shall be fully developed, all promise shall be fulfilled. There the city and the temple are one; for of the heavenly Jerusalem it is said, "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof."—T.

Ver. 20.—*Separation between the holy and the common.* The walls described by the prophet served another purpose than the most obvious one of enclosing a space and supporting a roof. They had a symbolical meaning. They were walls of separation. The several portions of the temple were invested with varying degrees of holiness, and in this arrangement there was no doubt a Divine significance and intention. There were parts reserved for Israelites, parts reserved for the priests, and one part into which the high priest alone was permitted to enter. In this way separation was effected between the more and the less holy, and between the holy and the common.

I. SUCH SEPARATION WAS APPOINTED BY DIVINE WISDOM. It was not, as similar arrangements in heathen temples may have been, a device of human ingenuity and a provision of human and sacerdotal policy. It was part of the Divine intention of which the whole was the outworking and expression.

II. SUCH SEPARATION WAS INTENDED FOR HUMAN INSTRUCTION. The Israelites

needed to be taught the elements of religious knowledge, and to be trained in rudimentary religious life. The means adopted to this end were in harmony with their condition, and with the stage of intellectual and spiritual development which they had reached. A wall of separation was certainly something very visible, tangible, and unmistakable; they who looked upon it, and who by it were prevented from approaching some sacred spot, were thereby taught most precious truths as to the character of the God to whose honour the temple was reared, as to the nature of his laws and his worship, as to the conditions of acceptance with him. Discrimination between the good and the wicked, the exclusion of the latter and the admission of the former into Divine favour,—such were moral lessons which the provisions connected with the temple precincts were admirably fitted to impress upon the minds of a rude and rebellious people.

III. THE LESSONS OF SUCH SEPARATION WERE OFTEN CORRUPTED BY HUMAN PREJUDICE AND UNSPIRITUALITY. The tendency of human nature is to rest in the symbol instead of passing on to that which is symbolized, to mistake the shadow for the substance. The material was designed to lead to the spiritual; but the importance which properly belonged only to the spiritual was sometimes attributed to the material. This was so not only with reference to the case before us, but with reference to all the provisions of a similar and symbolical nature which existed in connection with the temple and its worship. And Christians must not imagine themselves free from a similar liability to error. Even in our spiritual dispensation the same mistake is committed, and church buildings and sacraments are sometimes substituted for the great spiritual realities which they represent.

IV. THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH SUCH SEPARATION WAS TEMPORARY, AND HAS BEEN ABOLISHED BY CHRISTIANITY. One great work of our Divine Saviour was to break down the middle wall of partition that fenced off Jews from Gentiles, and to make of two "one new humanity." It was a first lesson of Christianity that men should give up calling any man or any thing "common or unclean." The change was brought about, not by levelling things sacred, but by raising things secular, and by steeping everything in a Divine light, pure and lustrous. All Christians are admitted into the true Israel; all are enrolled in the sacred priesthood; all are welcomed to fellowship with Heaven.

V. THERE IS A SENSE IN WHICH SUCH SEPARATION ENDURES, INASMUCH AS GOD EVER ENCOMPASSES AND ENCLOSES HIS PEOPLE WITHIN WALLS OF LIVING HOLINESS. He delights to *in*clude, but takes no pleasure in *ex*clusion. Into the heavenly city, which is a temple, there enters not anything unclean or common. From such contamination the blessed and glorified are for ever preserved. There is around the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, the worshippers of the heavenly temple, a wall which preserves them for ever from all molestation and from every incursion of evil. But *within* there is no distinction; there is one heart, one service, and one song.—T.

Vers. 4—14.—*Separation and society.* What did those "chambers" mean, of which we read so much in this vision? Their immediate use, as intimated to the prophet, is given in the thirteenth and fourteenth verses. They were for the personal acccommodation of the priests; that they might there, in a place which was nowise profane but thoroughly holy, eat that part of the sacrifices which fell to their share; and that they might there robe and unrobe, so as to serve in sacred vestments and mingle with the people in ordinary dress. Their object, therefore, was to maintain the separateness or sanctity of the priests. It has been suggested that they also answered this general purpose by constituting places for sacred retirement and devotion; possibly for the accommodation of those who, like Anna the prophetess, "departed not from the temple, night or day" (Luke ii. 37). Those who were to minister in the temple were to be provided with rooms which were separated from the commerce and the strife of the outer world, where there would be nothing to contaminate or interrupt. But what meant the "walk of ten cubits breadth" (ver. 4)? Was not this for *society*, as the chambers were for separation? Matthew Henry suggests that these "walks of five yards broad were for those that had lodgings in the chambers, that there they might meet for conversation, might walk and talk together for their mutual edification, might communicate their knowledge and experiences; for," he adds with characteristic good

sense, "we are not to spend all our time between the church and the chamber." We learn—

I. THE DUTY AND THE PRIVILEGE OF SEPARATION. 1. That which is *obligatory and constant;* viz. to be separate in spirit and in sympathy from sin; to stand apart, in spirit, from all that is in any way unchristian. 2. That which is *obligatory and frequent;* viz. to separate ourselves much and generally from the society of the sinful. Jesus Christ was thus "separate from sinners" (Heb. vii. 26). It is the sacred duty of most good men, and of all the young, to keep aloof from the vicious and profane; to decline the society, and firmly to refuse the friendship, of those who fear not God and whose conduct is unprincipled and deleterious. 3. That which is *wise and occasional;* viz. to retire into the seclusion of the quiet chamber, where there is no disturbing voice to prevent our close communion with the Father and Saviour of our spirits.

II. THE SERVICE OF SOCIETY. There are truths to be learned and there are influences to be gained in solitude which cannot be secured in society; but, on the other hand, there is a service which only society can render us. To meet men and to know them as they are living their daily life of toil and struggle; to come into close contact with their difficulties, their doubts, their joys, and their sorrows; to exchange ideas with them; to learn what their experience and their wisdom have to teach us, and to convey to them what we ourselves have learned in the solitary place; to be in the world, and still above it;—this is not only the true triumph of Christian principle, it is the fair and open opportunity of Christian usefulness.—C.

Vers. 15—20.—*The size and strength of the kingdom.* "The particularity with which these measurements are given . . . shows the importance attached by the prophet to the external dimensions. . . . The compass assigned to the sacred buildings exceeded the limits of all ancient Jerusalem. . . . Here is another of those traits intended to render manifest the ideal character of the whole description" (Fairbairn). The fulfilment is found in the glorious magnitude of the Church of Christ, of which the temple was designed to be the type. We look, then, at—

I. THE SIZE OF THE KINGDOM. The kingdom of Christ is indeed of vast dimensions; it requires a heavenly messenger to compute it. 1. It is *inclusive of all classes and characters.* It is not confined to rich or poor, or to those who have "neither poverty nor riches;" it is not intended for the learned any more than for the unlearned; it is the home of those who have been devout and upright all their days, and it offers an asylum to those who have wandered away into the darkness and fallen into the depths of sin. 2. It is *unlimited by race.* The Jew at first imagined that the kingdom was for him only; but it was not long before the providence and the grace of God demonstrated that the kingdom of Christ was open to the whole Gentile world; and missionary labours have proved that there is no climate beneath the sun where the seeds of Christian truth will not spring up and bear flower and fruit. 3. It is *extended through all time.* Nineteen centuries have nearly gone since John declared that the kingdom was "at hand," and, so far from there being any signs of completion, there is more active and successful evangelization than at any previous period of Church history. The prophet might well see a large space measured when the area of the kingdom was in question.

II. THE STRENGTH OF THE KINGDOM. This temple is a perfect square, five hundred reeds on every side. "Buildings which are four-square are the most stable, firm, and lasting." The kingdom of Christ is immovably strong, and nothing can withstand it, because: 1. *It rests on the basis of Divine truth.* Not "cunningly devised fables," but well-established facts, are the foundation on which the fair, spiritual edifice is resting—the *facts* of the Incarnation, of the works of beneficent power wrought, of the words of truth and grace spoken, of the resurrection from the dead accomplished by Jesus Christ; the *facts* of the apostolic ministry, of the opposition offered to the gospel and of its steady, spiritual, glorious triumph over it. 2. *It meets the deep and abiding needs of our humanity.* Beneath all skies, under all conditions, through all changes and circumstances, after all political and social revolutions, man wants the same things to be truly and profoundly satisfied. He wants a Divine Father of his spirit; a salvation from sin; a refuge in time of trouble; a source of elevation in all the meanness and littleness of earthly life; hope in death. This the

gospel of Christ is always offering him. To hungering, toiling, sorrowing, burdened humanity Jesus Christ is ever saying, "Come unto me, . . . I will give you rest." 3. *It relies on the Divine power and presence.* "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth; go ye, *therefore*, and teach all nations . . . lo, I am with you alway," etc. (Matt. xxviii. 18—20). In the presence, the sympathetic and active presence, of the all-powerful Redeemer we have the strongest assurance that the kingdom will extend and prevail; it is strong in its present and mighty Lord.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The consecration of the new temple by the entrance into it of the glory of the God of Israel (vers. 1—12), and a description of the altar with its dedication to the solemn ritual for which it was in future to be employed (vers. 13—27), form the contents of the present chapter, and complete the prophet's picture of the future sanctuary of Israel.

Vers. 1—12.—The consecration of the temple by the entrance into it of the glory of the God of Israel.

Ver. 1.—**Afterward,** etc. Having completed the survey of the temple precincts (ch. xlii. 15—20), the prophet's guide, "the measuring man," conducted him back to the gate that looked towards the east, *i.e.* to the gate leading into the outer court from the east (see on ch. xl. 6), perhaps because this was the principal entrance to the sanctuary, but chiefly because through it the impending theophany was to pass.

Ver. 2.—Scarcely had the prophet taken up his station at or near the gate when **the glory of the God of Israel** (see on ch. i. 28; iii. 23) **came from the way of the east,** as if intending to enter the temple by the very door through which it had previously departed from the temple (comp. ch. x. 19; xi. 22, 23). The **voice** which proceeded from the theophany and resembled **the noise of many waters,** is after the LXX. (καὶ φωνὴ τῆς παρεμβολῆς) by Keil and Smend understood to have been the sound produced by the motion of the wheels and the rustling of the wings of the cherubim (see on ch. i. 2, 4; x. 5), but is better taken, with Kliefoth and Hengstenberg, to signify the voice of the Almighty himself, *i.e.* of the personal Jehovah (comp. Rev. i. 15). The statement that **the earth shined with his glory** (comp. Rev. xviii. 1) has by Hävernick, Kliefoth, and others been supposed to indicate the absence of that "cloud" in which the glory of Jehovah appeared in both the Mosaic tabernacle (Exod. xl. 34, 35) and the Solomonic temple (1 Kings viii. 10, 11), and thereby to point to the clearer and more resplendent manifestations of the Godhead, which were to be given in connection with the new dispensation for which Ezekiel's "house" was being prepared. This, however, as Keil has shown, cannot be maintained in face of the facts that in both Exodus and 1 Kings "the glory of the Lord" is used synonymously with "the cloud," and that in Ezekiel's vision "the glory" and "the cloud" were alike present (see ch. x. 3, 4). Kliefoth and Schröder hold "the earth" which was illumined to have been "the whole globe," "the entire region of humanity," as in Isa. vi. 3; lx. 1, etc.; but there does not appear ground for departing from the ordinary sense of the words, that "the path" of the advancing God was irradiated by the brilliance of his material glory.

Ver. 3.—The prophet identifies the vision on which he now looks as the same he had formerly beheld on the banks of the Chebar, when he **came to destroy the city,** *i.e.* when, in obedience to Divine command, he stood forth to announce the destruction of Jerusalem. Ewald and Smend follow the Vulgate, *quando venit ut disperderet,* in substituting "he," Jehovah, for "I," Ezekiel; but the change is unnecessary, as the prophet's language is perfectly intelligible and quite correct, since "the prophet destroyed the city ideally by his prophecy" (Hitzig), and it is not unusual for Scripture to represent a prophet as himself doing what he is only sent to predict (comp. ch. iv. 2; xxxii. 18; Jer. i. 10). The prophet's reason for introducing this clause was manifestly the same he had for identifying the visions—to show that, while it was the same Jehovah who had departed from the old temple that was now returning to the new, there was nothing incongruous in the idea that he who in the past had shown himself a God of justice and judgment by overturning and destroying the old, should in the future exhibit himself as a God of grace and mercy by condescending to establish his abode in the new. The impression produced upon the prophet's soul by his vision was the same that had been produced by the former—*he fell upon his face* in awe and wonder.

Vers. 4, 5.—The prophet next narrates

that he saw the glory of the Lord entering into and taking possession of the "house," as formerly it had entered into and taken possession of the tabernacle and the temple (Exod. xl. 34, 35; 1 Kings viii. 10, 11), and that of this he was further assured by experiencing immediately thereafter—not a push from the wind, as Luther and Kliefoth translate, but an impulse from the Spirit (not "a spirit," Ewald, though the Hebrew word wants the article), which raised him from the ground upon which he had fallen (ver. 3), took him up (see on ch. ii. 2; iii. 12), and brought him into the inner court, exactly in front of the "house," where, having looked into the interior, he saw that **the glory of the Lord filled the house,** the language being that used in connection with the tabernacle and the temple.

Ver. 6.—**And I heard** him (better, *one*) **speaking unto me out of the house; and the** (literally, *a*) **man stood by me.** Two questions arise—Who was the speaker? and, Who the man? As to *the speaker*, the natural reply is that the One who addressed Ezekiel from the interior of the "house" was Jehovah himself, whose "glory" had just entered in to take possession of the house, and this view is adopted by most interpreters, though Hengstenberg and Schröder regard the man who stood beside the prophet as the one who addressed him. As to *the man*, it cannot, as Kliefoth maintains, be decided solely by the absence of the article before "man" that this was a different person from the guide who had hitherto conducted the prophet and measured the building. The article may have been omitted because the important point to be recorded was not the circumstance that the "one" who stood beside him was his *quondam* guide, but the fact that this "one" was a man. That he was also Ezekiel's old conductor is at least a natural suggestion when one finds him afterwards appearing as a measurer with a line in his hand (ch. xlvii. 3).

Vers. 7—12.—Debate exists as to who the speaker in the seventh verse was, whether Jehovah or the man—some holding with Kliefoth, Ewald, Smend, and Currey, that he was Jehovah; others, with Hävernick, Keil, Hengstenberg, and Schröder, that he was "the man;" and still others, with Plumptre, that it cannot be decided which he was. One thing is clear, that if "the man" was the speaker, his words and message were not his own, but Jehovah's. Yet unless the man had been the angel of the Lord—the view of Hengstenberg and Schröder—it will always seem incongruous that he should have addressed Ezekiel without a "Thus saith the Lord." Hence the notion that the speaker was Jehovah is, perhaps, the one freest from difficulty. The message announced or communication made to the prophet related first to Jehovah's purpose in entering the temple (vers. 7—9), and secondly to his object in showing the house to the prophet, viz. that he might show it to the house of Israel (vers. 10—12).

Ver. 7.—The LXX. and the Vulgate divide the present verse into two parts, and take the first as equivalent to a solemn word of consecration, the former supplying ἑώρακας the latter *vidisti*, "thou hast seen." The Chaldee Targum inserts, *hic est locus*, "this is the place," and in so doing is followed by Luther and the Revised Version. Some word, it is obvious, either a "see!" or a "behold!" must be interpolated, in thought at least, unless one adopts the construction of the Authorized Version, with which Smend agrees, and makes "the place of my throne," etc., to be governed by the verb "defile," or, with Ewald, places it under the regimen of "show" in ver. 10, throwing the whole intervening clause into a long parenthesis—a device which does not contribute to lucidity. Of the two expressions here employed to designate the sanctuary—not the temple proper, but the whole house with its surroundings—the former, **the place of my throne,** though peculiar to Ezekiel, receives explanation from the conception, familiar to earlier writers, of Jehovah as dwelling between the cherubim (Exod. xxv. 22; 1 Sam. iv. 4; 2 Kings xix. 15; Ps. lxxx. 1; Isa. xxxvii. 16); the latter, **the place of the soles of my feet,** was of frequent occurrence to denote the ark of the covenant (1 Chron. xxviii. 2; Ps. xcix. 5; cxxxii. 7) and the temple (Isa. lx. 13; Lam. ii. 1). The word of consecration was expressed in the promise, **I will dwell (in the temple) in the midst of the children of Israel for ever,** etc., which went beyond anything that had been spoken concerning either the tabernacle of Moses or the temple of Solomon (comp. Exod. xxv. 8; xxix. 45; 1 Kings vi. 13). The second part of the verse announces what would be the result of Jehovah's perpetual inhabitation of the temple—the house of Israel would no more defile his holy Name either **by their whoredom or by the carcases of their kings in their high places,** or, according to another reading, *in their death*. That the whoredom signified idolatry (comp. ch. xvi.) commentators are agreed. What divides them is whether this also is alluded to in the alternative clause. Rosenmüller, Hävernick, Keil, Fairbairn, and Plumptre believe it is, contending that the "carcases of their kings" (comp. Lev. xxvi.

30; and Jer. xvi. 18) was a contemptuous and satirical designation of the idols they had formerly served, that the word "kings" is frequently employed in this sense in Scripture (see Isa. viii. 21; Amos v. 26; Zeph. i. 5), and that the special sin complained of, that of building altars for dead idols in the very temple court, had been practised by more kings than one in Judah (comp. 2 Kings xvi. 11; xxi. 4, 5—7); and in support of this view may be urged first that it is favoured by the use of the term *bamoth*, or "high places," in ver. 7, and secondly by the exposition offered in ver. 8 of the nature of the sin. Ewald, Hitzig, Kliefoth, and Smend, on the other hand, regard the sin spoken of in the second clause as different from that indicated in the first, maintaining that while this was the practice of defiling Jehovah's sanctuary by idolatry, that was the desecration of the same by the interment in its courts of their dead kings. Against this, however, stands the fact that no authentic instance can be produced of a Judæan sovereign's corpse having been interred in the temple area. David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, and others were buried in the city of David (1 Kings ii. 10; xi. 43; xxii. 50), and a place of sepulchres existed on the south-west corner of Zion in the days of Nehemiah (iii. 16); but these prove nothing unless the temple hill be taken, as no doubt it sometimes was, in an extended sense as inclusive of Mount Zion. Similarly, the statement that Manasseh had a burial-place in the garden of Uzzah (2 Kings xxi. 18, 26) cannot be adduced in support of this view, unless it can be shown that the garden of Uzzah was situated on the temple hill. On the whole, therefore, the balance of argument inclines in favour of the first view, though it does involve the introduction of a figurative sense into the words.

Ver. 8.—**In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds**, etc. The first "their" can only refer to "the house of Israel and their kings;" the second "their" may also allude to these, but is best taken as pointing to the "idols," whose thresholds or temples, according to the view adopted of the preceding verse, were set up in the court of Jehovah's temple, and so close to the latter that nothing stood between them except the temple wall. Smend, who favours the second view of the preceding verse, considers this verse as a complaint against the kings for having erected their royal residence on Mount Zion, in the immediate vicinity of the temple; but as David's palace was older than the temple, it is not likely Ezekiel was guilty of perverting history in the manner this hypothesis would imply.

Ver. 9.—**Now let them put away their whoredom**, etc. What has just been declared to be the necessary consequence of Jehovah's abiding in the midst of Israel is now enjoined upon Israel as an indispensable prerequisite of Jehovah's taking up his residence amongst them. Ezekiel's theology in this respect harmonizes with that of Old and New Testament writers generally, who invariably postulate purity of heart and life as a necessary condition of God's abiding in the heart, while asserting that such Divine indwelling in the heart is the only certain creator of such purity (comp. ch. xviii. 31; xxxvi. 26; Isa. i. 16, 25; xxvi. 12; John xiv. 23; 2 Cor. vi. 17; Jas. iv. 8).

Ver. 10.—**Show** (or, *make known*, i.e. publish the revelation concerning) **the house to the house of Israel.** For this purpose the vision had been imparted to the prophet. **That they may be ashamed of their iniquities.** This told the reason why the vision of the house should be made known to Israel. **And let them measure the pattern**; *sum, number*, or *well-proportioned building*. This explained how, by beholding the house, Israel would be led to repent, and be ashamed of her iniquities. There is no ground for thinking the ultimate object Jehovah had in view, in recommending the house of Israel to note the proportions of the visionary edifice, was, as Wellhausen, Smend, and others allege, that they might reproduce these in the post-exilic building; if they were to measure, *i.e.* scan and meditate upon the fair dimensions of the "house," it was that they might understand its religious or moral and spiritual significance, both as a whole and in detail.

Ver. 11.—**And if they be ashamed of all that they have done.** This cannot signify that Ezekiel was not to show the house until they had evinced a sincere penitence for past wickedness, since the converse has just been stated, that their repentance should flow from a disclosure to them of the house; but that in the event of the presentation to them of the "well-measured" building awaking in them any disposition of regret and sorrow, then the prophet should proceed to unfold to them its details. He should show them **first the form of the house**, *i.e.* the external shape of the building, **and the fashion thereof**, or its well-proportioned and harmonious arrangements; **the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof**, *i.e.* its exits and entrances (ch. xliv. 5), **and all the forms thereof**, which can only mean, the shapes of its several parts; **and all the ordinances thereof**, or regulations concerning its use in worship, **and all the forms thereof**—the same words as above, and therefore omitted by the LXX. as well as some Hebrew manuscripts, and, after their example, by Dathe, Hitzig, Ewald, Smend, and others, though Keil, Kliefoth, Schröder, and others

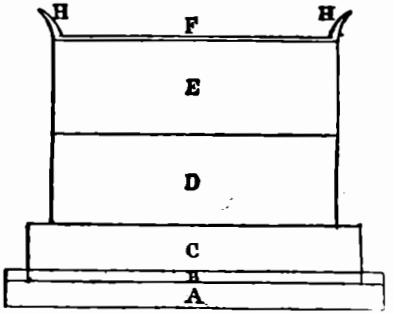
retain the clause as genuine, and regard it as an illustration of Ezekiel's habit of crowding words together for the sake of emphasis—**and all the laws thereof**, by which were probably signified "the instructions contained in these statutes for sanctification of life" (Keil). In addition to rehearsing the above in the hearing of the people, the prophet was directed to write them in their sight, if it be not open to understand the "writing" as explanatory of the way in which the "showing" was to be made.

Ver. 12.—**This is the law of the house.** In this instance "the house" must not be restricted to the temple proper, consisting of the holy place and the holy of holies, but extended to the whole free space encompassing the onter court, the quadrangular area of three thousand cubits square (ch. xlii. 16—20); and concerning this house as so defined, the fundamental *torah*, law, or regulation, is declared to be that of its complete sanctity. Ewald and Smend, as usual, unite with the LXX. in connecting "upon the top of the mountain" with "house;" but expositors generally agree that the clause belongs to the words that follow, **Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about**; and that the prophet's thought is that the entire territory upon the mountain summit included within the above specified border, and not merely the inner sanctuary, or even that with its chambers and courts, was to be regarded as most holy, or as a *holy of holies*, i.e. was to be consecrated as the innermost *adytum* of the tabernacle and temple had been, by the indwelling of Jehovah. Smend notes that "This is the law" is the customary underwriting and superscription of the laws of the priest-code (see Lev. vi. 9, 14; vii. 1, 37; xi. 46; xii. 7; xiii. 59; xiv. 54; xv. 32); but it need not result from this that the priest-code borrowed this expression from Ezekiel, who employs it only in this verse. The more rational hypothesis is that Ezekiel, himself a priest, made use of this formula because acquainted with it as already existing in the so-called priest-code.

Vers. 13—27.—The temple-altar described (vers. 13—17), and the ritual for its consecration explained (vers. 18—27).

Ver. 13.—**The measures of the altar.** The altar is הַמִּזְבֵּחַ, that formerly mentioned as standing in the inner court, immediately in front of the "house" (ch. xl. 47), the altar of burnt offering, and not the altar of incense in the holy place (ch. xli. 22). Its dimensions, then omitted, are now reported in connection with its consecration, which also is narrated as a pendant to that of the "house," because of the intimate connection between the two—the consecration of the altar being practically equivalent to the consecration of the house, and the consecration of the house finding approximate expression in the consecration of the altar. As in the other portions of the temple, so in this, the measurements are given **after the cubits**, *i.e.* by or in cubits, the length of each cubit being noted at "a cubit and an handbreadth," as in ch. xl. 5. They are likewise taken first from the foundation upwards (vers. 13—15), and then from the top downwards (vers. 16, 17). The first portion measured is the bottom; literally, *the bosom* (Hebrew, חֵיק, "that which embraces," from חוּק, "to embrace;" LXX., κόλπωμα: Vulgate, *sinus*); but what exactly that signified is debated among interpreters. Gesenius thinks of "the hollowed part for the fire;" Hitzig, of "a frame running round, a stand in which the altar stood;" Kliefoth, of "a deepening

THE ALTAR.



A, base; B, border; C, lower settle; D, upper settle; E, "mount of God" (harel); F, "hearth of God" (ariel); H, H, horns of altar.

on the wooden ring in which the whole altar stands;" Keil, of "a lower hollow or base of the altar, formed by a border of a definite height;" Smend, of "the channel or gutter at the altar base, which should receive the sacrificial blood;" Hävernick, Currey, and Plumptre, of "a base upon which the altar stood." If Smend's feasible notion be not adopted, then probably that of Hitzig, Kliefoth, or Keil most nearly expresses the conception of the Hebrew term. The altar was surrounded by an enclosure in which it seemed to be set, or out of which to rise; the dimensions of this "stand" or "enclosure" being a cubit in height, and a cubit in breadth, with a border on its edge round about a span or half a cubit high. This, the stand just described, should be **the higher place**; literally, *the back*; hence the support, base (Revised Version), or elevation, ὕψος (LXX.) of the altar.

Ver. 14.—The next measurements which are taken **from the bottom upon the ground**, *i.e.* from the גֵּיק, "base," or ground framework above described, **to the lower settle**, *i.e.* to the top of the undermost of the two "terraces," or enclosures," or "platforms," of which the altar consisted, **are two cubits** of height with **one cubit** of breadth; the measurements which follow, **from the lesser settle**, *i.e.* the undermost, **to the greater settle**, *i.e.* the uppermost, **are four cubits** of height with **one cubit** of breadth.

Ver. 15.—Noteworthy is the word **altar**, which in this verse renders two distinct Hebrew terms, הַרְאֵל and אֲרִיאֵל, which Gesenius, Hitzig, Ewald, Smend, and others, after the LXX. (τὸ ἀριήλ), identify as synonymous, and translate by "hearth." But the first can only signify "the mount of God," while the latter may mean either "lion of God" or "hearth of God." Kliefoth, deriving the latter from אָרָה, "to consume," and אַיִל, "a ram," prefers as its import "ram-devourer;" Hengstenberg, resolving into אַיִל, "a ram," and אֲרִי, "a lion," proposes as its equivalent "ram-lion," *i.e.* "the lion that consumes the rams for God"—a rendering closely allied to that of Kliefoth. In any case, the terms allude to parts of the altar: the second, Ariel (equivalent to the hearth on which God's fire burns), according to Keil, Kliefoth, and the best expositors, meaning the flat surface of the altar; and the first, Harel (conveying the ideas of elevation and sanctity), the base on which it rested. The height of this base was **four cubits**, while from the hearth projected **four horns**, as in the altars of the Mosaic tabernacle (Exod. xxvii. 2; xxxviii. 2; Lev. iv. 7, 18; viii. 15) and Solomonic temple (Ps. cxviii. 27). If the length of these be set down, as Kliefoth suggests, at three cubits, then the whole height of the altar will be in cubits—one for the ground bottom, two for the lower settle, four for the upper, four for the bases of the hearth, with three for the horns, equal to fourteen in all; or, omitting the horns, of which the length is not given, and the altar base, which is distinguished from the altar, ten cubits in all for the altar proper. As to the symbolic import of the "horns," Kurtz, after Hofmann and Kliefoth, finds this in the idea of elevation, the "horns," as the highest point in the altar, bringing the blood put upon them nearer to God than the sides did the blood sprinkled on them (see 'Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament,' § 13); Keil, after Bähr, in the notions of strength, beauty, and blessing, the horns of an animal being the points in which its power, grace, and fulness of life are concentrated, and therefore fitting emblems of those points in the altar in which appears "its significance as a place of the revelation of Divine might and strength, of Divine salvation and blessing" ('Biblische Archäologie,' § 20).

Vers. 16, 17.—The measurements that now begin concern the breadth of the altar, and proceed from above downwards. First **the altar**, or, *hearth of God* (Hebrew, *ariel*) **was twelve cubits long and twelve broad**, *i.e.* **was square in the four squares** (or, *sides*) **thereof**, or a perfect square (comp. Exod. xxvii. 1; Rev. xxi. 16). Next **the settle**, or, *enclosure* (Hebrew, הָעַזָרָה) of ver. 14, **was fourteen cubits long, and fourteen broad in the four squares** (or, *sides*) **thereof**; the fourteen being made up of the twelve cubits of the altar-hearth's side with one cubit of ledge from the settle all round. The only question is to which "settle," the upper or the under, reference is made. Some expositors, identifying the greater Azarah with the Harel, *i.e.* the "upper settle," with "the mount of God" or the base of the hearth, make the altar height only seven cubits from the ground to the hearth. The general belief, however, is that they cannot be so identified. Among interpreters who distinguish them, Kliefoth, with whom Smend agrees, holds the "settle" in this verse to be the *harel*, or "mount of God," which extended (Smend says with a *hëk*, or "gutter") one cubit on each side beyond the *ariel*, or "hearth of God," so that the "mount of God," on which the "hearth of God" rested, was fourteen cubits square. Then, assuming a similar extension of one cubit at each stage—in the greater azarah, the lesser azarah and the hëk, or ground bottom—he finds the surface of the greater azarah to be sixteen, of the lesser azarah eighteen, and of the ground bottom twenty cubits square. Keil, with whom Schröder and Currey agree, objects to this as involving too much of arbitrary assumption, and takes the "settle" of this verse to mean the lower azarah; so that no additional measurements are required beyond those given in the text. If the square surface of the greater azarah be considered as having been the same as that of the harel, so that their sides were continuous, then, as the "ground bottom" extended one cubit on each side beyond the lower azarah, the altar at its base was a square of sixteen cubits. Comparing now these measurements with those of the altar of burnt offering in the tabernacle and the temple, one finds that the former was only five cubits square and three cubits high (Exod. xxvii. 1), while the latter was twenty cubits broad, but only ten cubits high (2 Chron. iv. 1), which awakes the suspicion that the different views above noted have been insensibly influenced by a desire on

the part of their authors to make them harmonize with the measurements of the temple. But there does not appear sufficient reason why the measurements of Ezekiel's altar should have agreed with those of Solomon's rather than with those of Moses'. **The border** (or, *parapet*) **of half a cubit** which ran round the ledge, or bottom, of a cubit, at the foot of the lower azarah was clearly designed, not for the protection of the priest officiating, but for ornament. **The stairs** (or, *steps*), mention of which closes the description, mark a departure, not from the pattern of the Solomonic temple, in which the altar must have had steps (see Keil's 'Biblische Archaölogie,' p. 141), but from the pattern of the tabernacle, in which altar-steps were disallowed (Exod. xx. 26) and did not exist (Exod. xxxviii. 1—7). But if, as Jewish tradition asserts, the post-exilic altar had no steps as Ezekiel's had, having been reached by an inclined plane, because in the so-called book of the covenant steps were forbidden, how does this harmonize with the theory that Ezekiel's vision temple was designed as a model for the post-exilic temple? And why, if the priest-code was the composition of a writer who worked in the spirit and on the lines of Ezekiel, should it have omitted to assign steps to the tabernacle altar?

Ver. 18.—**The ordinances of the altar.** These were not the regulations for the sacrificial worship to be afterwards performed upon this altar, but the rites to be observed at its consecration when the day should arrive for its construction. As the altar in the tabernacle (Exod. xxix. 1—46; Lev. viii. 11—33), and that in Solomon's temple (1 Kings viii. 63—66; 2 Chron. vii. 4—10), so was this in Ezekiel's "house" dedicated by a special ceremonial before being brought into ordinary use. The particular ritual observed by Solomon is not described in detail; but a comparison between that enjoined upon and practised by Moses with that revealed to and published by Ezekiel shows that while in some respects they agreed, in other important particulars they differed. In both the ceremony largely consisted in offering sacrifice and smearing blood, and lasted seven days; but in the former the ceremony was performed exclusively by Moses, consisted, in addition to the above, of an anointing of the altar, the holy utensils, and the tabernacle itself with oil, and was associated with the consecration of the priests; whereas in the latter, in addition to some variations in the sacrificial victims, which will be noted in the course of exposition, the priests should bear an active part—there should be no anointing with oil, and no consecration of the priests, the priesthood being assumed as already existing. If in Ezekiel's ritual there was no mention of a cleansing of the sanctuary (that of ch. xlv. 18 referring to a special case), but only of the altar, that was sufficiently explained by the circumstance that Jehovah was already in the "house." **The final clause, to offer burnt offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon,** indicates the purpose for which the altar was to be used.

Ver. 19.—**Thou shalt give to the priests.** This injunction, which was addressed to Ezekiel, not as the representative of the people or of the priests (Smend), but as the prophet of Jehovah, made it clear that Ezekiel was not to act in the future consecration of the altar alone as Moses did in the dedication of the tabernacle altar, but that the priests were to bear their part in the ceremonial. If some expressions, as the use of "thou" in this and the following verses, appear to suggest that Ezekiel alone should officiate, the employment of "they" in vers. 22, 24, 25, 26 as plainly indicates that Ezekiel's share in the ceremonial was to be performed through the medium of the priests. And, indeed, if the temple was a pattern designed to be converted into an actual building after the return from captivity, as the newer criticism contends, it is apparent that Ezekiel could not have been expected to have any hand in its erection. **The Levites that be of the seed of Zadok.** The assistants of Ezekiel and the officiating priests at the new altar were not to be the whole body of the Levitical priesthood, but those only who derived their descent from Zadok (see on ch. xliv. 15). **A young bullock for a sin offering.** With the offering of this the ritual commenced, as in Exod. xxix. 1, 10 and Lev. viii. 14 (comp. ch. xlv. 18). It is observable that in the Levitical code a young bullock, *i.e.* of a bullock in the full vigour of youth, is appointed as the requisite sin offering for the priest, *i.e.* the high priest, who was the head and representative of the people.

Ver. 20.—**And thou shalt take of the blood thereof, and put it.** The application of the victim's blood to and upon the altar formed an integral part of every expiatory offering; but "whereas in all the other kinds of sacrifice the blood was poured indifferently round about the altar of the fore court, in the sin offering it was not to be *sprinkled*, lest the intention should be overlooked, but *smeared* with the finger upon the horns of the altar ('And the priest shall put of the blood upon the horns,' Lev. iv. 7, 18, 25, 30, 34)" (Kurtz, 'Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament,' § 107). In the present instance the blood was to be carefully put upon **the four horns** of the altar—the only part to be smeared with blood in the Mosaic

consecration (Exod. xxix. 12)—**the four corners of the settle**, or azarah, but whether the greater or lesser is left undecided, though in all probability it was the under, if not both, and **the border round about**, that mentioned in ver. 17; and the effect of this smearing with blood should be to **cleanse and purge**, or, *make atonement for*, the altar; not for the people, as Hävernick interprets, saying, "without an atoned-for altar, no atoned-for people (*ohne entsühnten Altar, kein entsühntes Volk*)," but for the altar, either, as Kliefoth suggests, because, being made out of a part of the sinful earth and world, it required to be sanctified, or because, as Plumptre prefers, the sins of the people having been, as it were, transferred to it, it stood in need of cleansing.

Ver. 21.—As a further stage in the ceremony, the bullock of the sin offering, *i.e.* the carcase of the victim, was to be burned by Ezekiel or the priest acting for him in **the appointed place of the house, without the sanctuary**, as in the Mosaic code it was prescribed that the flesh of the bullock, with his skin and dung, should be burned without the camp (Exod. xxix. 14; Lev. iv. 12, 21; ix. 11, 15; comp. Heb. xiii. 13). Ewald at first sought the place here referred to in the sacrificial kitchens (ch. xlvi. 19), which it could not be, as these belonged to the "sanctuary" in the strictest sense; he has, however, since adopted the view of Kliefoth, which is doubtless correct, that the "place of the house, without the sanctuary" meant the *gizrah*, or separate place (ch. xli. 12), which was a part of the "house" in the widest sense, and yet belonged not to the "sanctuary" in the strictest sense. Smend thinks of the *migrash*, "suburbs" or "open spaces," which surrounded the temple precincts (ch. xlv. 2); and these were certainly without the sanctuary, while they were also appointed *for the holy place*, and might have been designated, as here, *miphkadh*, as being always under the inspection of the temple watchmen. The fact that in post-exilic times one of the city gates was called *Hammiphkadh* (Neh. iii. 31) lends countenance to this view. That in this "appointed place" the carcase of the bullock should be consumed was a deviation from the Mosaic ritual, which prescribed that the fat portions should be burned upon the altar, and the rest eaten as a sacrificial meal (Lev. iv. 10, 26, 35; vii. 15, 31; Deut. xii. 7, 17, 18). Keil appears to think that the fat portions may have been burned upon the altar, although it is not so mentioned, and that only "those points" were mentioned "in which deviations from the ordinary ritual took place."

Ver. 22.—The second day's ceremonial should begin with the offering of **a kid of the goats** (rather, *a he-goat*) **without blemish for a sin offering**, the ritual observed being probably the same as that of the preceding day. The substitution of a "he-goat," the offering for a ruler who sins (Lev. iv. 23, 24), instead of a "young bullock," which formed the first day's offering, was a deviation from the ritual prescribed for the consecration of the Mosaic altar and priesthood (Exod. xxix. 36). The object of the offering of the "he-goat" was the same as that of the offering of the "bullock," viz. **to cleanse the altar**; not, however, as if the previous day's cleansing had been insufficient and required to be supplemented, or had already become inefficient so as to call for renewal, but in the sense of recalling the meaning and impression of the previous day's ceremonial, and so in a manner linking it on with the several rites of the succeeding days.

Vers. 23, 24.—The presentation of **a burnt offering unto the Lord** was the next item in the ritual that should be observed. The material composing it should consist of **a young bullock without blemish**, as in the ordinary sacrificial code (Lev. i. 3, 4, 5), **and a ram out of the flock without blemish**, as in the consecration of the priests (Exod. xxix. 18) and of the altar (Lev. viii. 18). The persons presenting it should be the prophet, **thou**, and the priests, **they**, as his representatives. The mode of offering should be by burning, the distinctive act in a burnt offering, as that of a sin offering was sprinkling, and that of a peace offering the sacrificial meal, and by casting salt upon the carcase, a feature in every meat offering (Lev. ii. 13), and here added probably to intensify the idea of purification. "In the corrosive and antiseptic property of salt there is hidden something of the purifying and consuming nature of fire; hence the Redeemer, in Mark ix. 49, combines the salting of the sacrifice with the purifying fire of self-denial" (Kurtz, 'Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament,' § 145). The significance of it should be an expression of complete self-surrender unto Jehovah, as the necessary outcome of the antecedent act of expiation. The time of its presentation should be immediately after the cleansing of the altar on the second day, and presumably also on the succeeding days. Whether the burnt offering was, as Keil maintains, or was not, as Kliefoth contends, offered also on the first day is difficult to decide, though the former opinion has, perhaps, most in its favour. The Mosaic ritual always enjoined a burnt offering to be offered as a sequel to the sin offering (comp. Exod. xxix. 14, 18, with Lev. viii.

14, 18; and see Kurtz, 'Sacrificial Worship of the Old Testament,' § 86); and, in accordance with this, vers. 23 and 24 naturally follow on vers. 19—21, ver. 22 being interposed because of the variation in the sin offering for the second day.

Ver. 25.—**Seven days.** Hitzig reckons these as additional to the first (ver. 19) and second (ver. 22) days; Kliefoth begins them with the second; Keil, Schröder, Currey, and the majority of expositors take them as inclusive of the first and second. Hitzig's proposal may be set aside, since it cannot be maintained without erasing "thou shalt make atonement for it" in ver. 20, and the first half of the present verse. In favour of Kliefoth's view may be urged that the first day appears to stand out from the others, and to be distinguished by the peculiar character of its offering—a young bullock for a sin offering, without any accompanying burnt offering; that the offerings on the second and subsequent days are alike, a he-goat and a ram; that on each of the seven days a goat is mentioned for a sin offering, whereas on the first day it was a young bullock that was slain; and that in Zech. iii. 9 occurs an allusion to what seems a special day such as this first day of Ezekiel. In support of Keil's interpretation it is contended that the seven days were to be employed in purging or making atonement for, and purifying the altar, which was in part at least (even admitting a distinction in meaning between חִטֵּא and קִדֵּשׁ) the business of the first day; that the general statement in ver. 20 as to a goat for a sin offering on the seven days admits of easy qualification by the previous statement in ver. 19; and that seven days was the normal duration of religious solemnities under the Law (see Lev. viii. 33; 1 Kings viii. 65; 2 Chron. vii. 8, 9).

Ver. 26.—**They shall purge the altar.** Smend thinks it strange that only the purification of the altar should be mentioned here, while that of the sanctuary is referred to later (ch. xlv. 18), and finds in this an explanation (at least, perhaps) of the fact that in Exod. xxix. 36 only the consecration of the Mosaic altar—not of the Mosaic tabernacle—is reported. He conceives it likely that the author of Exod. xxix. 36 copied Ezekiel, but does not explain why Ezekiel may not have copied the author of Exod. xxix. 36. **And they shall consecrate themselves;** more correctly, *they*—i.e. the priests—*shall consecrate it;* literally, *fill its hand.* The phrase, יָדוֹ מִלֵּא, "to fill one's hand," *sc.* with gifts, occurs with reference to Jehovah (Exod. xxxii. 29; 1 Chron. xxix. 5; 2 Chron. xxix. 31). It is also employed in the sense of filling the hand of another, as *e.g.* of a priest, with sacrificial gifts, when he is instituted into his sacred office (Exod. xxviii. 41; xxix. 9; Lev. xxi. 10; comp. Lev. viii. 27). Here the hand to be filled is that of the altar, which is personified for the purpose (compare the use of the terms "bosom" and "lip" in connection with the altar). The meaning is that the altar, at its consecration, should have a plentiful supply of gifts, to symbolize that the offering of such gifts was the work for which it was set apart, and that it should never be without them.

Ver. 27.—**The eighth day, and so forward.** Omit "so." With this day the regular sacrificial service should commence. Thenceforward the priests should offer upon the altar **the burnt offerings and peace offerings** of the people. The omission of sin offerings is explained by Keil, on the principle that "burnt offerings" and "peace offerings" were "the principal and most frequent sacrifices, whilst sin offerings and meat offerings were implied therein;" Kliefoth adding that ch. xliv. 27, 29; xlv. 17, 19, 22, 23, 25; and xlvi. 20 show it cannot be inferred that sin offerings were no more to be offered on this altar. At the same time, the prominence given to "burnt" and "peace" as distinguished from "sin offerings" may, as Schröder suggests, have pointed to the fact that the sacrificers who should use this altar would be "a people in a state of grace," to whom Jehovah was prepared to say, **I will accept you,** not your offerings alone, but your persons as well; and not these because of those, but contrariwise, those on account of these. Kliefoth's idea, that the first day symbolized the future day of Christ's sacrifice, that the seven intermediate days (on his hypothesis) pointed to the period of the Christian Church, and that the eighth day looked forward to the time of the end, while not without elements of truth, is open to this objection, that in the period of the Christian Church there should have been "no more sacrifice for sin;" and yet, as Kliefoth admits, "sin offerings" were afterwards to be made upon this altar.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 2.—"*The glory of the God of Israel.*" The visionary glory that dazzled the eyes of the rapt seer is but an earthly suggestion of that ineffable glory in which the

unseen God is ever clothed. We may take the manifestation of glory as a type and suggestion of that higher wonder.

I. IN WHAT THE GLORY OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL CONSISTS. 1. *The radiance of heavenly light.* The glory is like the effulgence of sunlight, the raying forth of beams of splendour from the central fountain of light. (1) It is perfect truth. All error and falsehood are excluded. God dwells in infinite knowledge and wisdom and truthfulness. (2) It is absolute holiness. No stain or fleck of sin ever touches the supreme purity of God. (3) It is infinite love. The glory of God is most seen in his goodness. By wonderful deeds of grace he manifests his glory. (4) It is unutterable joy. The joy of truth, holiness, and love must ever dwell in the heart of God. God smiles over his creatures: that is his glory. 2. *The wealth of heavenly voices.* "His voice was like a noise of many waters." God has broken the silence of eternity. He has called to his lost and wayward children. With variety of utterance and of truth God has made his voice heard. His gospel message is his glory.

II. HOW THE GLORY OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL APPEARS. Ezekiel saw the glory dawn in the east like the pure, bright light of a rising sun. 1. *It was not always manifest.* There had been a night previous to this glad dawn. There had been dark days in the Captivity, when even the radiance of God seemed to be dimmed. (1) In the world's history there have been awful, blank ages, out of which all Divine glory seems to have been excluded. (2) In individual experience there are sad days when the soul exclaims, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" 2. *It is made manifest.* (1) To the world, in Christ, who manifested forth the glory of his Father. Thus St. John says, "And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father" (John i. 14). (2) To the individual, by faith. When we truly seek for the brightness of God's countenance in Christ, and trust his grace, there rises a light in the darkness, and God's glory appears.

III. THE RESULTS THAT FOLLOW THE MANIFESTATION OF THE GLORY OF THE GOD OF ISRAEL. "And the earth shined with his glory." This radiance was not confined to celestial regions. It was no vain pageantry displayed among the clouds. It came into the world as a brightness for earthly things. This is ever the case with manifestations of God's glory. It is especially so with Christ who "tabernacled among us," and so brought the celestial glory to dwell on earth. The shining forth of God's truth and goodness makes a new day for the world. It is already reflected in purified, gladdened lives; it will be fully seen in a renewal of the whole face of society. That which seems to be most remote and unpractical is thus most closely associated with the needs and hopes of mankind. The world pines and despairs for lack of more visions of Divine truth and goodness. The perfect day will be when this light shines into the darkest places of the earth, *i.e.* when all men have received "the glorious gospel of the blessed God."

Ver. 3.—*God the same in judgment and in mercy.* The remarkable point of this verse lies in the fact that Ezekiel could detect no change in the manifestation of the Divine glory when he compared the new appearance which heralded the great redemption of Israel with the earlier appearance which preceded the denunciation of wrath and doom. God is the same in both cases.

I. THE FACT. This has two sides—one relating to the time of judgment, and the other concerned with the period of redemption. 1. *God's mercy is not lost in judgment.* He was glorious when he came to judgment, and one essential element of the glory of God is his ineffable love. We may not see love in wrath, but it is present, for "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Heb. xii. 6). God does not change his nature because men sin, nor indeed does he cease to yearn over his poor fallen children with infinite pity because it has become well that he should smite them in his great anger. 2. *God's righteousness is not lost in redemption.* He loses none of the glory of his holiness by saving sinners. Christ came to "magnify the Law and make it honourable" (Isa. xlii. 21). Righteousness is honoured (1) in the Person of Christ, our great Representative, who offered his pure and spotless soul as a perfect sacrifice to God; (2) in the deliverance of man from sin. Righteousness itself desires an end of sin more than the mere punishment, which is but a means towards that end. Thus the glory of God's holiness is most manifest when he redeems man from sin and leads him into a new, holy life.

II. ITS CONSEQUENCES. 1. *There is no escape from the law of righteousness.* The subjects of a changeable autocrat watch his fickle moods, and endeavour to seize on lucky moments when he appears to be in a good humour, in order to extract some favour from him. No such manœuvres are needed, or can be of any use, when men are looking for God's grace. On the one hand, he is always desirous to save and bless; on the other hand, he is never weakly negligent in regard to the great principles of justice. We can never evade his laws. 2. *There is no reason to despair on account of the wrath of God against sin.* That wrath was always felt by God, though it has not always been perceived by man. "God is angry with the wicked *every day*" (Ps. vii. 11). Yet God has shown continuous love, and has put forth repeated efforts of mercy to save his fallen children. He has not changed towards us because he has veiled his mercy and displayed his wrath for a season. The same ever-righteous and ever-merciful Father who at one time smites in anger and at another saves in grace will act to us just as we do to him. "With the froward thou wilt show thyself froward," etc. (Ps. xviii. 26). Therefore our part is to be plain and straight with God, simply trusting his great love, and honestly endeavouring to fulfil his holy will.

Ver. 5.—*Filled with glory.* I. THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE TEMPLE. Ezekiel saw the temple filled with the glory of God. This was only a vision; but it was predicted concerning the rebuilt temple that the glory of the latter house should exceed that of the former (Hag. ii. 9). Yet, while young men rejoiced at the sight of the new structure, old men wept as they remembered the greater splendour of Solomon's temple, which Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed (Ezra iii. 12, 13). Nevertheless, it was promised that, though in materials and architecture Zerubbabel's temple might be inferior to Solomon's, there was this unique privilege reserved for the new building—the Lord himself should suddenly appear in it (Mal. iii. 1). This promise was fulfilled in the advent of Christ (Luke ii. 27).

II. THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE CHURCH. The spiritual brotherhood of Christians, the Church of Christ, has taken the place of the temple of the Jewish economy (1 Cor. iii. 16; Eph. ii. 21). Now God has manifested his glory in the Church, for it is seen in the display of Christian graces, so that she is like a city set on a hill, that cannot be hid. But the brightness or the dimness of this glory will be just proportionate to the Christ-likeness or the worldliness of the Church. The more of the Spirit of Christ there is in this great temple, the more of the glory of God will there be there. Her glory has been looked for in size, numbers, wealth, power, influence, intellect; in her sons of genius and her works of worldly importance. But these things do not reveal God's glory. Christ is the Glory of the Church—"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27).

III. THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE WORLD. Ezekiel saw the broad earth ablaze with the radiance of the heavenly glory (ver. 2). But this glory was concentrated in the temple. God has a brightness for all men, but the best light for those who seek his near presence. The world now reveals the glory of God in creation and in providence. When the world is brought to the feet of Jesus Christ it will enjoy the richer, fuller glory of God in Christ. Even now, in so far as a Christ-spirit is spread through society, a new light dawns over the old weary world. The day is coming when the earth shall be full of his glory. That will be the day of the earth's perfect redemption and man's perfect blessedness.

IV. THE GLORY OF GOD IN THE SOUL. God's glory comes into the Church and the world by first entering individual souls. To the darkest and saddest this joy and light will appear, when the barred door is opened to the Guest who stands knocking and graciously waiting for admission. There is no glory equal to that which his in-coming will bring. We may think much of riches, popularity, intellect, and power. But the greatest glory of a human life is the glory of goodness. The highest ambition should be to live a good and useful life. Christ's aureole surrounds such a life.

Ver. 10.—*The goodness that leads to repentance.* The people of Israel are to see the new temple in order that they may be ashamed of their iniquities. The goodness of God in restoring the temple will induce them to look with new horror on their old

sins. Thus God's goodness in life generally, and in the gospel of Christ, should lead men to see the evil of their ways and to repent of it.

I. GOD'S GOODNESS PRECEDES MAN'S REPENTANCE. The full enjoyment of that goodness is not possible for those who are still living in sin. The prodigal son cannot enjoy the fatted calf before he comes to himself, or arises and returns to his father. But long before any movement is made on the side of the sinner to return, God is preparing the way for him. The shepherd seeks the wandering sheep. The woman sweeps for the lost piece of silver. Even in Eden, on the discovery of the Fall, God promised a gospel and victory (Gen. iii. 15). The pity of God for Israel in Egypt was made known to Moses in the bush before the people made any effort to effect their own escape. Christ came into a world that was even unwilling to receive him, yet he came for the world's salvation. The gospel is now only too often offered to unwilling hearers. God now waits to be gracious.

II. THE REVELATION OF GOD'S GOODNESS SHOWS THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE. 1. *It should reveal our sin.* (1) By contrast. God is good to us, while we behave ill to him. Surely we should see how sad it is to live in rebellion against a gracious God. Thus the dreadful guilt of ingratitude is added to other sins. (2) By the manner of the revelation. It is a revelation in holiness. God's glory was seen in the temple. It is a revelation in atonement for sin: the temple was for sacrifices; Christ died on the cross as a sacrifice for the world's sin. Thus the very proclamation of the gospel involves a declaration of man's sinfulness. 2. *It should incline us to return.* If God had turned against us we might feel no inclination to go back to him. But his graciousness should serve as a great attraction. Surely it is bad indeed to hold out against such forgiving mercy as that of our Father and of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

III. GOD'S GOODNESS ASSISTS US IN REPENTANCE. 1. *It opens the door for our return.* There is no longer any excuse for delay. Despair need not paralyze our returning footsteps. The preparation is an invitation; the invitation should be an inspiration. 2. *It moves our hearts to return.* We may only be hardened by denunciations of wrath and doom. But love should melt the heart of ice. God's love is shed abroad in the hearts of his people. It comes as a glow of reviving energy to the soul that is unable to save itself because it is just "dead in trespasses and sin." All is now ready. The temple built, the sacrifice offered, the welcome waiting. "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17).

Vers. 18—22.—*The sin offering.* When Ezekiel, a prophet, describes the ceremonial of a sin offering with some minuteness, it is reasonable to suppose that he intends the details to be suggestive of spiritual facts.

I. THERE MUST BE AN OFFERING FOR SIN. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." The practical universality of sin offerings among various races has made it appear that the sacrifice arose from an instinct of conscience. We feel that we need a propitiation for our sins. Now, Christ has come to satisfy that need, and his one death on the cross is the great atonement for the world's sin. How the Sacrifice is efficacious may be a matter of consideration, and may give rise to divergent views. The important point lies in the fact that Christ *is* a Sacrifice for sin (Heb. x. 12).

II. THIS OFFERING MUST BE UNBLEMISHED. God cannot take what is not pure and perfect. Even in our daily work we should give our best to God. But in making an offering for sin, no man can come before God without blemishes being seen on all he is and all he does. Christ is the one perfect Sacrifice for sin, the Lamb without spot. No one ever convicted him of evil-doing. He is the *well-beloved* Son of God.

III. A PRIEST MUST PRESENT THE OFFERING. It must be given by one who has a right of close access to God. With our sin we shrink back from God and dare not enter his holy presence. Therefore, though in rite and symbol priests may be found to present sacrifices, as a fact, since all men are alienated from God, no men can truly serve as priests. But Christ, who became a Man, and so our Representative, and was like us in all other points, was unlike us in his sinlessness. He never lost his near communion with God. He is our one High Priest, and he does not need to offer sacrifices first for himself, as was the case with the Aaronic priesthood.

IV. THE BLOOD OF THE OFFERING MUST BE SPRINKLED. This essential part of the ceremonial was necessary that the completed sacrifices might be efficacious by the application of its results to the worshippers. Christ has made his great sacrifice of himself once for all. But now the benefits of his death have to be shared individually by men. These benefits do not accrue spontaneously and without men's actively receiving them. The blood must be sprinkled; the grace of Christ's great sacrifice must be taken home. 1. *There must be individual faith in Christ.* Thus the sacrifice is made efficacious in the case of each man who will avail himself of it. 2. *There must be an application to the whole of life.* The blood of the Passover lamb was sprinkled on the lintels and doorposts of the houses of the Hebrews. We need to have our homes and all that belongs to us brought into subjection to Christ, and then brought under the gracious influences that stream from the great Sacrifice on Calvary.

Ver. 27 (last clause, "And I will accept you, saith the Lord God").—*Accepted by God.* I. CONSIDER THE MOTIVES THAT MAY INDUCE GOD TO ACCEPT MEN. It might be supposed that God was self-sufficient and would not look beyond the range of his own infinite Being; or that, if he took note of what was other than himself, he would be satisfied with the high intelligence and pure character of angel-beings, and not condescend to notice such feeble and sinful creatures as mortal men. Yet God has reasons for accepting men. 1. *His infinity.* This, which has been raised as an objection, really works the other way, for an infinite Being is not simply vast and only concerned with vast things. To him the greatest finite thing is infinitely small. If he attends to the greatest he may as easily stoop to the smallest. But, further, his very infinity embraces all things, the most minute as much as the most gigantic. 2. *His royalty.* God is the supreme Sovereign of the universe; therefore he is concerned with all the subjects of his realm. 3. *His justice.* Having made men, he will not desert his own creatures. 4. *His love.* God is love, and love is full of sympathy. From this supreme motive God must be ever yearning to gather his children to himself, ever longing to give them a welcome home.

II. OBSERVE THE GREAT HINDRANCE THAT MAY PREVENT GOD FROM ACCEPTING MEN. If God is the infinite Sovereign of the universe, what is to hinder his welcoming whomsoever he will? The Greeks dreamed of a fate ruling supreme even over the dread Olympian deities; but we hold that there is no power above that of God. No *power*, it is true. Yet there is the awful principle of righteousness, and even God follows and does not bend that supreme principle. It may be identified with his own holy nature. Then we must say that God cannot but be true to himself. This being so, a great obstruction stands in the way of man's being accepted by God, viz. man's sin. The holy God cannot give a free welcome to the unholy man. It would be to contradict his own being and character.

III. NOTE THE CONDITIONS ON WHICH GOD ACCEPTS MEN. The Divine act of receiving men is placed by Ezekiel after the sacrificial ritual. God accepts on condition of sacrifice. There were first of all sin offerings, and then dedication (burnt) offerings and thank (peace) offerings. With us the first grand condition is fulfilled. Christ is the one Sacrifice for the world's sin. In Christ's great surrender of his pure soul to God through death, God sees the sacrifice of man by his Representative, and therefore, accepting the sacrifice, accepts man on whose behalf it is offered. We must make the sacrifice our own by entering into the spirit of it, by ourselves dying to sin and yielding our hearts and wills to the crucified Saviour. Then God accepts his penitent children. But for full acceptance thank and dedication offerings were added. God expects us to come to him with grateful hearts, and to yield our souls to him in obedient service. When we approach him thus, as it were with our peace and our burnt offerings, he accepts us.

IV. LOOK AT THE RESULTS OF BEING ACCEPTED BY GOD. The first is immediate and personal—the reconciliation of the child with his father, and the glad return of the wanderer to the home of his childhood. But from this follow other consequences. We desire that God will accept us as his servants; when he does we have the privilege of living and labouring for him. We would have our work and gift accepted by God; for him to receive our offerings of service or sacrifice is to be most honoured by God. At death he will receive his faithful servants to the heavenly rest.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The glory of the Lord in the house.* The glory of the house of God does not consist in its beauty and grandeur, but in the indwelling of the Eternal himself. When the tabernacle of witness reared in the wilderness was completed, when Moses had finished the work, "then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." Upon the occasion of the dedication of Solomon's temple, "it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord." What Ezekiel, in vision, observed upon the inauguration of the ideal temple was therefore in agreement with what had taken place upon two of the most memorable occasions in the history of the Jewish Church.

I. THIS WAS A RESTORED GLORY. 1. The prophet had seen the glory of the Lord depart from the temple by the way of the east, towards the Mount of Olives. In consequence of the sin of the people and the defilement of the sacred building, the holy Presence had been removed. The idolatry by which the temple and the city had been profaned had caused the withdrawal of the Divine favour. Man was constituted to be the temple of the Eternal; by his sin he alienated and repelled "the Divine Inhabitant." 2. The purification of the temple was the occasion of the return of the lost favour and glory. The presence of the Most High is represented as returning by the way by which it had departed. When man's nature is cleansed, when the way is made open for the restoration of relations long suspended, then the glory of God is once again displayed, and his favour once again enjoyed.

II. THIS WAS AN IMPRESSIVE GLORY. 1. As described in itself it is characterized by majesty. The figurative language employed is drawn from those sources by which the senses are chiefly impressed. When we read that the voice was as the sound of many waters, and that the earth shone with the splendour, we are assured that the spiritual majesty which such figures are employed to set forth was nothing ordinary. 2. And this assurance is deepened as we are led to recognize the manner in which the manifestation affected the prophet himself: he "fell upon his face," overcome with the grandeur of the spectacle. It is not every nature that is so affected by great spiritual realities. Yet there is nothing in the world so deserving of reverence, so truly fitted to call out emotions of awe, as the spiritual presence of the Eternal in his Church. It is only because men are so carnal, so insensible to true grandeur, that they can know of the Divine nearness and yet remain unmoved.

III. THIS WAS A DIFFUSED GLORY. In simple and sublime language the prophet relates what followed the marvellous return of Deity: "The glory of the Lord filled the house." How wonderfully does the statement express the universal pervasion of the Church by the Divine presence and splendour! How fitted is such a representation to remove our misconceptions and our prejudices! There is no member of Christ's Church however lowly, there is no work in Christ's Church however unobtrusive, there is no section of Christ's Church however lacking in learning, wealth, refinement, or power, which is not full of the glory of the Lord—of that glory which is spiritual, which is apprehended by human minds when quickened and enlightened by the Spirit of God.

IV. THIS WAS A PERMANENT GLORY. The glory of the temple at Jerusalem passed away. In the appointed time the building perished, and not one stone was left upon another. But the temple which Ezekiel saw in his vision was a spiritual, and therefore an abiding, temple, whose walls shall never be taken down, whose ministrations and offerings shall never cease, and which shall ever echo with ten thousand voices uttering the high praises of our redeeming God.—T.

Ver. 7.—*The Divine indwelling.* There is a peculiar solemnity in this utterance. The prophet has beheld the return of the Lord's glory to his house, and has seen its courts filled with the mystic lustre. He stands in the inner court, the attendant angel being by his side. And the voice of the Lord, mighty as the sound of many waters, addresses him as the son of man, and assures him that the Eternal Spirit has now taken

up a perpetual abode within his consecrated temple, and that those courts shall henceforth be pure from every defilement, and shall be holy unto the Lord.

I. THE FACT OF THE DIVINE INDWELLING. It appears that this is set forth under two metaphors, both just and impressive, yet, even when taken together, inadequate to set forth the great reality. 1. The Church is God's dwelling, his home, where he reveals himself in his compassion and kindness, and where he admits men to his sacred fellowship, upon terms of delightful, though reverent, intercourse and familiarity. 2. The Church is God's throne, whence he rules by the publication of his Divine and righteous laws, and the exercise of his just, irresistible, and yet benign authority. It is as though he were at once the Father of the spiritual family and the King of the spiritual dominion. He is, indeed, all this, and more than this, to the Church he loves and has redeemed.

II. THE ACCOMPANIMENTS OF THE DIVINE INDWELLING. These, as represented in this passage, are: 1. Deliverance from past idolatries, by which humanity has been defiled, degraded, and disgraced. 2. By implication, reverence for God's holy Name, displaying itself in holiness, in obedience, in praise. It was the expulsion of evil abominations which made the return of the Lord a possibility; it is the prevalence of holy worship and affectionate service which secures the lasting residence and reign of the great and glorious Inhabitant.—T.

Ver. 10.—*Shame for sin.* Shame is an emotion which is often misdirected. Men are ashamed sometimes of those things of which they ought rather to boast, whilst they boast of those things of which they ought to be ashamed. There is one habit of which men ought always to be ashamed—the habit of sinning against God. It was this which Ezekiel was directed to bring home to the hearts of his fellow-countrymen of the house of Israel.

I. THE SIN OF WHICH A JUSTLY SENSITIVE NATURE IS ASHAMED. The iniquities with which the prophet was directed to charge the people of Jerusalem, and for which he was instructed to reproach them, were their idolatrous practices, especially in connection with the temple precincts. The palaces of the idolatrous monarchs of Judah adjoined the consecrated edifice, and in those palaces heathen rites were celebrated. Not only so, some of the kings of Judah, as Ahaz and Manasseh, actually introduced idolatry into the very courts of the temple. Of such infamous conduct both monarchs and subjects may well have been ashamed. All who put the creature in the place of the Creator, who worship, whether with their lips or in their hearts, others than God, are virtually guilty of idolatry, and have need to humble themselves with shame and confusion of face.

II. THE MANNER IN WHICH SHAME FOR SIN IS AWAKENED. 1. The Word of God without propounds the sacredness and the exacting character of the Divine Law which has been violated, and summons the offender to contrast his conduct with the commandment which is holy, just, and good. 2. The voice of conscience within responds to the voice of the Word, testifies to its Divinity and its authority, rebukes the sinner for his rebelliousness, and awakens within the soul fear of the righteous judgment of God. No wonder that this conjunction should cause bitter humiliation, poignant shame, deep contrition.

III. THE PROPER EFFECTS OF SHAME FOR SIN. 1. The offence is loathed and forsaken; the idolater abandons his idols, the unjust, impure, and profane relinquish their sinful practices. 2. Reverence ensues for the Law and ordinances of God. Corresponding to the aversion and humiliation felt in the retrospect of evil courses now abandoned, is the aspiration which takes possession of the penitent, urging him to conformity to the Divine character, and subjection to the Divine will. To be ashamed of sin is to glory in righteousness, to boast one's self in God.—T.

Ver. 12.—"*The law of the house.*" The connection to which is owing the introduction and treatment in this place of the law of the house, appears, though it is not very plain, to be this—Lawlessness has been described, lawlessness, taking the form of sinful rebellion against God, and defiance of just authority, especially in the sacred precincts of the temple, which have been diverted from spiritual worship to idolatrous rites. Lawlessness, by contrast, suggests law, and especially law as applicable to the house of

God. And to the spiritual apprehension, the orderly arrangement, the symmetrical proportions of the temple, and the provision made for all proper services, all speak of the Church of Christ, which is obviously symbolized by the sanctuary beheld by the prophet in his vision.

I. THE FACT OF DIVINE LAW IN THE CHURCH. With the increase of habits of observation and of accuracy, with the diminution of superstition, men have come to recognize throughout the universe the presence and operation of law. Many different opinions prevail regarding natural law; but it is recognized as a reality. No wonder that a settled conviction should have formed itself in men's minds that "order is Heaven's first law." It would be strange, indeed, were the Church, God's noblest revelation of himself now on earth, exempt from what seems a condition of all God's works. As there was a law of the house in the Jewish temple, so also is there in the Church of the redeemed, the living temple of the Spirit.

II. THE RANGE OF DIVINE LAW IN THE CHURCH. Referring to the context, we observe that the prophet notes the application of law to the form, the furniture, the ordinances, the holiness, of the temple. When we come to consider the range within which law is observable in Christ's Church, we find ourselves constrained to believe that the *principles* are universal and unmistakable, but that in the *details* there is uncertainty. Opinions differ as to the measure in which law of an explicit character governs the constitution, the ministry, the observances, etc., of the Church of Christ. Some students are disposed to look to Scripture and to primitive usage for more explicit instructions regarding Church matters than are others; and this holds good of those taking different views of what are known as ecclesiastical principles. But all are agreed that mutual love is a universal obligation, that acceptable worship must be spiritual, that efforts are to be made for the enlightenment and salvation of mankind. And such laws as these are of far more importance than many customs and regulations upon which different opinions prevail.

III. THE AUTHORITY OF DIVINE LAW IN THE CHURCH. It is the authority of right, which, however it may be misunderstood and practically repudiated by any, is not denied, but is admitted by all. It is also the authority of love; the Divine Lawgiver himself declared, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

IV. THE BLESSINGS OF DIVINE LAW IN THE CHURCH. These are apparent to those who consider how wretched would be the state of a Church without a law, and how little less wretched the state of a Church handed over to the control of fallible and imperfect human legislators. The past history of the Church shows that it has truly prospered just so far as the rules laid down for it by Divine authority have been obeyed, just so far as man has been kept in abeyance, and human policy and human selfishness have been repudiated. Beside the direct blessings which have accrued to the Church itself through subjection to "the law of the house," it must be borne in mind that the world has benefited by the example which has thus been set to earthly institutions and secular rulers, that owe more than they are forward to acknowledge to those principles of authority and subjection which by the Church have been introduced into and impressed upon the world.—T.

Ver. 27.—*Acceptance.* The purpose of the temple is the establishment and maintenance of harmonious relations between God and the sons of men. By sin those relations have been interrupted; by religion they are restored. What was symbolized by the material temple at Jerusalem—its priesthood and services and sacrifices—is realized in the spiritual temple of the new covenant, in which Christ is the Sacrifice and the Priest, and in which the Holy Spirit sheds the Shechinah-glory through the holiest of all. Acceptance thus takes the place of estrangement.

I. ACCEPTANCE IS OF GOD'S GRACE, AND IS UNDESERVED.

II. ACCEPTANCE IS IN VIRTUE OF THE HIGH PRIEST'S MEDIATION AND INTERCESSION.

III. ACCEPTANCE IS FOR THE OBEDIENT, THE COMPLIANT, THE SUBMISSIVE.

IV. ACCEPTANCE IS ALIKE OF THE PERSON AND OF THE SERVICE.

V. ACCEPTANCE INVOLVES THE ENJOYMENT OF ALL THE MANIFESTATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE DIVINE FAVOUR.

APPLICATION. 1. One aim of a spiritual ministry to men is to convince them that

in their sinful state they are without acceptance with God. 2. Another aim of such a ministry is to exhibit the divinely appointed method of obtaining and enjoying acceptance with God. 3. Yet another aim is to expose false and delusive representations of the way of acceptance. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."—T.

Vers. 1—9.—*Sunshine after storm.* The prophet of Jehovah has inspected all the plans of the second temple. In clearest vision he has seen all its parts arranged. The sacred edifice has grown to perfection before his eye. Court within court has successively appeared. And now the great question arises, "Will the God of heaven again stoop to dwell there?" In vain will be all this preparation and toil unless Jehovah shall fill the house again with his presence. In vain will be all ceremony and all sacrifice unless the God of Abraham responds to human appeals. The prophet's suspense is only for a moment. As soon as the separation between the "sanctuary and the profane place" is accomplished, the God who had retired because of the desecrations of his palace again approaches. He resumes his wonted place. Again, as in the days of Solomon, his glory fills the central shrine. No change has occurred in his dispositions and intentions. He is ready to keep to the full his part of the Abrahamic covenant. As he fulfilled his word in departing, so will he in returning.

I. GOD'S UNCHANGEABLENESS IN HIS SELF-MANIFESTATIONS. "The visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar." As the splendour of light had been the best imagery that could illustrate his presence in the past, so is it still. All that God had been to Israel in the ages gone, he was prepared to be again. The past condescensions of God were a pattern according to which he will act in the future. It was an accommodation to human weakness that the sun should image forth the essential nature of Jehovah, and, inasmuch as it worthily serves that purpose, it shall be a permanent dress in which Jehovah shall appear. But all metaphors are inadequate, all conceptions of him are inadequate. The light of his presence transcends far the brightness of the material sun. He is the Light of all light.

II. GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE IN THE PRINCIPLES OF HIS RULE. "The vision which I saw was according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city." Although God had withdrawn his favour from Israel, although he had chastised his people sore, he had not altered a single rule of action nor abandoned any principle of covenant. He was the same God who had pledged himself to Abraham's seed, the same God who had delivered them from the hands of their foes, the same God who had given them over to the Chaldeans, who now was preparing for them restoration and honour. God had acted throughout upon a line of clear consistency. The conduct and the loyalty of the people had changed; therefore they had felt the rod of his anger. The same fatherly heart which had rewarded obedience also punished rebellion. The man who turns his back upon the sun makes a shadow for himself, yet the sun has in no wise changed. The warm beams that penetrate and bless the ploughed furrows of the field only harden and injure the trodden surface of the soil. God remains, in the essential principles of his government, the same, although sometimes men bask in his friendship, and sometimes writhe beneath his rod.

III. GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE IN HIS CHOICE OF ABODE. "I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever." So long as they are children of Israel—men of faith and prayer—so long will God dwell among them. It is a permanent and unchangeable law that God finds delight among the sons of men, and wherever his presence is desired his presence will be found. If provision is made for him in the heart, in the home, or in social gatherings, he will speedily descend. If separation from sin has been made; if altars are reared and sacrifices are brought; if, in humility and reverence, he is sought, certainly he will come and dwell in their midst. In such circumstances, God may always be expected to come.

IV. GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE IN HIS MODE OF COMMUNICATING WITH MEN. "I heard him speaking unto me." It has ever been God's wont to communicate to the race by the agency of a man. He speaks to one, that the one may convey the message to the many. He enlightens one, that the one may enlighten others. God honours the human family by making one a mediator between himself and the rest. The man selected to

be a prophet is blessed thereby, and he learns the lesson of responsibility. To have at our disposal the well-being of many (if a man have the true prophet's spirit) elevates a man, and brings into activity all the best qualities of his nature. In every age God has thus dealt with men.

V. GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE IN HIS MORAL LIKINGS AND DISLIKINGS. "They have even defiled my holy Name, . . . wherefore I have consumed them in my anger." *That* which was offensive to God in Eden was offensive to him in Jerusalem; and *that self-same* thing is equally offensive to him to-day. Rebellion against his high authority, springing as it does from a lack of love, is to him an abomination. All sin is pollution, a stench in Jehovah's nostrils. To a refined mind, some forms of sin are offensive enough. Drunkenness is a sore offence to many. Murder is an abomination to a larger number yet. But in the esteem of God all forms of disobedience are as ghastly as murder, and to him murder is tenfold more vile than it is to us. Our spiritual sensibility is weakened by long indulgence in evil practice. By-and-by the redeemed will regard sin as God regards it; they will loathe it as God loathes it; they will esteem it as of all things the most abominable.

VI. GOD IS UNCHANGEABLE IN HIS CONDITIONS OF BLESSING. "Let them put away their whoredom . . . far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them." In the eye of God all idolatry is whoredom. The heart had gone after a foul and unholy rival. And the abandonment of all idolatry is God's immovable condition for blessing men. If every idol is cast out of the human heart, God will dwell there. The greatest promise he has ever made to men is based on this condition, either expressed or implied. His inmost nature is the quintessence of purity, and if the taint of active sin is in the atmosphere, he speedily departs. God's gifts in nature always depend on fixed conditions. Light will come to us only through a proper condition of atmosphere. The electric message will travel to its destination only along conducting media. Health visits men only through fixed channels. And life itself is conveyed only through conditions that never change. To obtain the abiding presence of God we must concede to him his own terms.—D.

Vers. 10—12.—"*The law of the house.*" Through all the ceremonies and observances of the ancient temple one conspicuous lesson ran, viz. a lesson of purity. Every rite and sacrifice were vocal with this lesson. It was written on every altar. It was visible in the priestly dress. It was engraven on the high priest's mitre. On every side men saw and heard the cardinal truth that God is holy, and that on earth he has a residence in order to make men holy.

I. GOD'S ABODE AMONG MEN IS THE HIGHEST PROOF OF HIS FAVOUR. This is the climax of his condescension. Material gifts he imparts to all his creatures: "He makes his sun to shine on the evil and on the good." It is an act of kindness for God to speak to men through a messenger; an act of kindness to provide pardon for the penitent; an act of kindness to open the way to spiritual eminence and joy. But to dwell among inferior, wayward, rebellious creatures is the highest piece of condescension we can conceive. Such an idea overwhelmed Solomon's mind with surprise: "Will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth?" And the incarnation of God in the Man Christ Jesus will ever remain the mystery of mysteries. If God be with us we can have no need. If God be with us we are sure to conquer, sure to rise in excellence, sure to reach perfection.

II. GOD'S AMAZING KINDNESS IS THE SOURCE OF PENITENCE. The end of this gracious revelation by Ezekiel is "that they may be ashamed of their iniquities." "What the Law could not do" love has accomplished. So constructed is the human heart that love (if mighty enough) shall move and conquer it. The exile in Babylon had ploughed deep furrows in the hearts of the Hebrews, and now the dew and sunshine from heaven had fallen on them to make the soil fruitful. The purity of the human soul is an end so transcendently great that no measures are too costly by which such an end can be gained. The magnificent provision which God was making, in Ezekiel's day, for dwelling again in the midst of Israel was well calculated to awaken remorse and shame in every breast. Jehovah's good will, in spite of provocation, was enough to melt the stoutest heart.

III. MAN'S PENITENCE IS THE GROUND OF FURTHER REVELATION FROM GOD. "If

they be ashamed . . . show them the form of the house," etc. Right moral dispositions are essential to an understanding of God. "To the froward God will appear as froward." To the Jews of his day Jesus said, "How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" As natural light cannot find its way into our dwelling if the window be barred with shutters, so cannot God's truth enter the mind if the mind be choked with worldly things. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him;" "To the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." For God to reveal his will to sin-loving men would be "to cast pearls before swine." *That* heart must be right towards God that desires to know the truth; and whensoever a man eagerly desires the truth, God will reveal it unto him. The man who has a docile mind shall see a light that others do not see, shall hear a voice that others do not hear.

IV. GOD'S REVELATIONS TO MEN HAVE A PRACTICAL ASPECT. "Write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof." God has seen fit never to indulge human curiosity. Questions that have no practical bearing on conduct God will not answer. To indulge the curiosity of men would divert them from the great practical tasks required of them—tasks which are the largest channel of blessing. Further, God has condescended to put his will in a written form, that it may be more clearly known, and may have permanence amid the dissolutions of mankind. *These* chapters in the prophet's book which seem to us void of interest, were written by special command of God. They have served a useful purpose in the past; they may fulfil a beneficent mission in time to come. "All Scripture, written by inspiration of God, is profitable"—it promotes some noble end. The fashion of the temple, its court within court, its many gates and porches, all conveyed important lessons to the Jews, they convey momentous lessons still.

V. GOD'S TEMPLE IS A VISIBLE AND IMPRESSIVE REVELATION OF HIS HOLINESS. "The law of the house" is *this*, viz. holiness. The sanctuary of God incorporates men's idea of God. Unless men adopt God's thoughts and cherish God's feelings, they will not build God's temple after God's plan. This is the visible and eloquent witness for God, age after age. If it be truly a temple of God, and God reside in it, it will be a centre of light and purity and blessing to the neighbourhood. The purifying power will touch every worshipper. The gracious influence will be felt in the home, in the city, in every commercial circle; it will spread through the nation; it will bless the world. "The whole limit thereof round about shall be holy." What the sanctuary is, the town or city will be. What the combined sanctuaries of the land are, the nation will be. This law of God's house is influential holiness—holiness that uplifts and ennobles and beautifies humanity; the holiness that springs from love.—D.

Ver. 27.—*Foundation of acceptance with God.* It is a question vital to the interests of men, "How to find reconciliation with God." If the Bible contains no authentic information on this head, it contains no real gospel. Martin Luther tersely described this doctrine of justification as the hinge of a standing or a falling Church. It is the pivot of salvation or perdition for every man. What the sun is in the midst of the solar system, what the heart is to the human body, what the mainspring is to a watch, the doctrine of man's justification before God is to all the other doctrines of religion. On this momentous matter God has clearly revealed to us his will. It is so plainly unfolded that he "may run who reads." The Old Testament is in complete accord with the New. Acceptance is based on vicarious sacrifice. On the part of man active and implicit faith is required.

I. ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD IS MAN'S PRESSING WANT. All other needs are subordinate to this. God's favour converts man's hell into heaven. To bring men into reconciliation with God, all these visions were vouchsafed to Ezekiel. For *this*, all the sacrifice of animal life had been made. For *this*, the temple had been erected, and was now to be reconstructed. For *this*, the office of priesthood had been instituted. For *this*, every written revelation has been given. For *this*, God's mind has been deeply concerned.

II. FOR MAN'S ACCEPTANCE WITH GOD A MEDIATING PRIEST IS REQUIRED. The work of bringing men back to God is so full of difficulty that it must be accomplished by distinct stages. A priest serves many useful purposes. He is an instructor, by deed, if not by utterance. He is a sympathizing helper. He has near

access to God, and interest with him. The priest must be, of all men, the least erring. His mission must be marked as specially sacred. Every circumstance which can lend sanctity to his office must be provided. He must be mature in years, experienced in human needs. His person must be free from blemish. Frequent ablutions must be practised. Exact obedience to the commands of God must be observed. He must be a pattern man. God has been pleased to do for us through a Priest what he will not do without a Priest. And all the complicated arrangements of the priesthood were designed to impress men's minds with the gigantic evil of rebellion, and with the difficulty of regaining the lost place in God's regard.

III. FOR MAN'S ACCEPTANCE VICARIOUS DEATH IS NEEDED. The necessity for substitution for the endurance of penalty prior to reconciliation with God may be a necessity on God's side as well as a necessity on man's side. The maintenance of the Divine government throughout the universe is an object of supreme moment. To make pardon cheap and easy would loosen the bonds of loyalty, and depreciate the value of righteousness, in men's esteem. As law had expressed the moral relations between God and men, law must be maintained. The penalty of sin must be met. Innocent lambs and heifers must die that sentiments of penitence may be deepened in the human soul. So valuable is reconciliation between man and God that it is worth while to sacrifice hecatombs of inferior animals in order to gain the end. This was an educational process, that men might perceive how devoid of efficacy any sacrifice must be, short of the perfect sacrifice of God's Son. Whether our minds can comprehend the reason of the atonement or not, it is clearly the will of God that restoration of man can come only by the channel of vicarious sacrifice.

IV. FOR MAN'S ACCEPTANCE A COMPLETE CYCLE OF TIME FOR PREPARATION MUST ELAPSE. "When these days are expired, it shall be." Day after day, for seven days, a victim slain was demanded in order to purify the altar. The Jewish altar had been grievously desecrated and polluted; hence a complete purgation was required. Not until the completion of the week could the priests proceed to present any offerings for guilty men. A cycle of time was to be spent in the work of preparation. In like manner, the patriarchal and Levitical periods were a time of preparation for Messiah's work. Until men have learnt the tremendous evil there is in sin, until they have learnt that without Divine interposition moral renovation is impossible, they will not value a Saviour from sin; they will not listen to him. Therefore "in the fulness time"—then, and not till then—"the Son of God came forth."

V. FOR MAN'S ACCEPTANCE COMPLETE CONSECRATION OF SELF IS DEMANDED. The offerings appointed to be laid upon the altar were "burnt offerings." The burnt offerings must precede the peace offerings. By a burnt offering is meant *that* which must be wholly consumed. The sacrifice must be complete. A profound moral lesson is here inculcated; it should be written in capitals. Salvation means complete surrender to God, complete devotion to his service. If we keep back anything from God, we still grieve his heart, we mar our characters, we imperil our salvation. If one foe remains in the citadel, the city is not safe. One weed left in the garden may spread and spoil the whole. One germ of disease in the system may issue in death. Loyalty, to be worth anything, must be complete. In order to be saved, the Son of God must reign supremely in us, King over every thought.—D.

Vers. 1—6.—*The return of God's glory.* The prophet had witnessed in sadness the departure of the glory of the Lord (see ch. x. 18, 19; xi. 23). He has now a happy vision of its return; and of that return he gives a very graphic description. It affected him with solemn awe (ver. 3) as well as with sacred joy. He found himself transported to the place where, as a priest, he had an official right to stand (ver. 5), and there he saw the brightness of Jehovah's presence filling the sanctuary, while he heard the voice of the Lord communicating his holy will. The departure and the return of the Divine glory have various illustrations beside those which were witnessed in connection with the temple at Jerusalem. We may find this in relation to—

I. THE HUMAN WORLD. When man was sinless he enjoyed the very near presence and the very close fellowship of his Divine Maker; and even after he sinned, before the world was utterly corrupted by its iniquity, men possessed not a little of the near presence and of the communications of God. But as sin advanced God retired, and

there came to be no converse between earth and heaven. Then the glory of the Lord had departed. But "in the fulness of time" God manifested himself to the world—he came in redeeming grace to raise and restore our fallen race. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory" (John i. 14); we had "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6). As men looked upon him, as they heard his words, as they witnessed his life, as they beheld the glories of his goodness and his power, they had a nobler vision of the glory of the Lord than that of Ezekiel, as here described.

II. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. The glory of the Church is the presence of its Divine Lord—that presence as manifested by the indwelling and the action of his Holy Spirit. Great was its glory when that Divine presence was manifested on the day of Pentecost, not only (nor indeed chiefly) by the tongues of flame or the rushing mighty wind, but by the conversion of "three thousand souls." But there may come, as there often has come, a time when the glory of Christ has departed. When a Church sinks down into a condition of unbelief, or of spiritual pride and fancied independence, or of indulgence and (it may be) immorality, or of worldliness and prayerlessness, then might the prophet of the Lord, with inward eye, see the glory of the Lord "on the threshold" or on the summit of the mountain, no longer "filling the house." But when the sacred and the blessed hour of penitence and of prayer, of humility and of faith, arrives, then may be had another and happier vision—that of the Lord's return. Christ will come again, and he will reveal the glory of his goodness and his grace, imparting the blessings which once were lost, which had taken flight, and are now renewed; bringing with him power, beauty, joy, life, victory.

III. THE INDIVIDUAL SOUL. All outward pomps and all human distinctions are as nothing to the human soul compared with the glorious presence of the Divine Spirit in the heart of man. But though God comes to us thus and dwells with us, he will not abide with us if we do not retain our purity, our moral and spiritual integrity (see 1 Cor. iii. 16; 2 Cor. vi. 16). Yet may there be, in individual experience, a blessed return of the glory of the Lord. If there be a sincere and deep humility; if there be an earnest seeking after God in prayer; if there be a cordial reconsecration of the heart and life to the Divine Redeemer;—then will there be a gracious and a glorious return of his presence and of his blessing to the soul.—C.

Vers. 7—9.—*God's unapproachable sovereignty.* God now appears among his people as their Divine Sovereign; the house to which he comes in glorious manifestation is "the place of his throne" (ver. 7). There he is resolved to rule. Other kings, human potentates, had been reigning there, but their rule should now be over. They had been usurpers in that they had set up their will against his, "their threshold by his thresholds, their post by his posts" (ver. 8); but all such pretensions would be henceforth peremptorily disallowed; they would be unsparingly swept away: "I consumed them in mine anger." The Lord alone was to reign, without any rival, the unchallenged, unapproachable Authority. The *sanctuary* of the Lord was the *throne* of the great King.

I. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST THE SPHERE OF DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY. As God declared, through his prophet, that he would reign in the temple, so Jesus Christ claims to be the one and only Head and Ruler of his Church. "One is your Master, even Christ." We must not invade his "crown rights" in any way or under any consideration whatever. 1. To him we must pay our worship, not placing any created being by his side upon his throne. 2. By his revealed will we must determine the constitution of his Church. Whether we gather that from his own words, or from the spirit of his life, or from the words and action of his apostles, we must make the will of Christ absolutely supreme in all our collective action. And his will not only affects us in deciding on the forms and the rules of our ecclesiastical association, but also as to the spirit in which we hold our post and do our work in his kingdom; we are essentially disloyal to him when our attitude or bearing toward any of our brethren is other than that which illustrates the spirit of Christ.

II. THE CHURCH OF CHRIST THE SOURCE OF DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY. The source in the sense of being instrumental in its promotion. For it is to the Church that God has committed *that truth* which alone will establish it; and it is of the Church he

expects *that life* which will contribute so largely to its extension. The Church—every Christian Church—has: 1. To proclaim the sovereign rights of him who is the God of our life; to present God to men as the Divine Author of their being, Fountain of their joy, Source of all their comforts and their blessings, Father of their spirit, Preserver and Guardian of their life; as that Divine One in whom they "live and move and have their being," "with whom they have to do" in a deeper sense and to a far higher degree than they have with any human being. 2. To present the regal claims of the Lord of our salvation; to hold up before the eyes of men that Son of man who came down from heaven to be our Teacher, Leader, Friend, and Saviour; who lived, taught, wrought, sorrowed, and died for our redemption; that Son of God who rose in triumph from the grave and ascended to the right hand of God; who has a supreme right to the trust, the love, the obedience, the full and entire devotion of all who have received the story of his dying love and living power. 3. To show the way of a true, thorough, happy subjection to the Divine rule. Thus will the Church of Christ become "the place of his throne."—C.

Ver. 12.—"*The law of the house*"—*universal holiness.* "The law of the house, what was pre-eminently entitled to be called *the* law, consisted in the whole region of the temple mount being most holy. Not, as hitherto, was this characteristic to be confined to a single apartment of the temple; it was to embrace the entire circumference occupied by the symbolical institutions of the kingdom—the chambers allotted to the priests, and even the courts trodden by the people, as well as the immediate dwelling-place of Jehovah. All were to have one character of sacredness, because all connected with them were to occupy a like position of felt nearness to God and equally to enjoy the privilege of access to him." For the glory of the Lord—his manifested presence—*filled the house;* every one, therefore, in every part of the sacred precincts, stood in very close and hallowed relation to the living God, and character must correspond with privilege. The Church of Christ is now the "house" of the Lord, and respecting its holiness we have—

I. ITS TWO SPIRITUAL CONSTITUENTS. These are: 1. *Felt nearness to God.* He only can be truly said to be holy who realizes continually how near he is to the living God, how intimate is the relationship in which he stands to him, how free is his access to him; and who, realizing this, does in truth "walk with God" and "have fellowship with the Father." 2. *Separateness from sin.* The holy man is he who, like the righteous and holy Father himself, "hates all manner of iniquity," puts far from him, far from his sight and from his sympathy as well as from his conversation and his conduct, everything that defiles and dishonours; he is the man who repels from his soul, and therefore banishes from his life, all falsehood and falsity, all impurity, all covetousness, all forms of dishonesty and intemperance, all irreverence and profanity.

II. ITS UNIVERSAL PREVALENCE. "The whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy." Not one particular compartment, but the whole "mountain of the Lord.' Thus with the Church of Christ, holiness is to characterize: 1. *All its members*, whatever their position or function may be, whether they be ministers or whether they hold no official position at all. There is, indeed, a peculiar and emphatic demand made upon those who speak for Christ, that they should be holy; but any one member of the Christian household who does not realize his nearness to God and does not separate himself from sin, is not qualified to take his place there, he is not obeying "the law of the house," he is a disloyal subject, an unworthy inmate. 2. Its members *in all their relationships.* Not only, though markedly and unmistakably there, in all their distinctively religious engagements, but in every sphere in which they move—domestic social, literary, artistic, municipal, political. At all times and in every place the people of God are to have respect to "the law of the house," for wherever they are they are members of the household of God.

III. THE SECRET OF ITS MAINTENANCE. How are we to be holy, and to maintain our sanctity in all the rush and strife, under all the burdens and provocations, in all the unwholesome atmosphere, of daily life? 1. By being much, in thought and prayer, with Jesus Christ, the holy Saviour. Much of his friendship will mean much of his spirit, for we constantly grow into the likeness of him we love. 2. By receiving into

our minds all we can welcome of Divine truth (see John xv. 3; xvii. 17). 3. By seeking and obtaining the cleansing and renewing influences of the Holy Spirit.—C.

Vers. 13—27.—*Purification and preparation.* Almost all the regulations pertaining to the sacrifices under the old economy bore upon the supreme question of sanctity. God would impress upon his people, by every means and in every way, that the Holy One of Israel must be approached by those only who were pure and holy; that if they would "ascend unto the hill of the Lord" they *must* come "with clean hands and a pure heart." Hence everything and every one had to be carefully purified or consecrated in preparation for the solemn service. In these verses we have the same idea once more affirmed in the prophet's vision. The priests who officiated were to be duly consecrated (ver. 26); the animals slain were to be very carefully selected, only those without blemish being allowed (vers. 22, 23, 25). And even the altar itself, which might have been thought to be incapable of any impurity, had to be formally purged and cleansed (ver. 20). Sin offerings and burnt offerings were to be presented, not forgetting the salt (ver. 25), that the altar might be perfectly prepared for use, and that the worshippers who approached it might find acceptance with the Lord (ver. 27). Such preparation by sacrifice is unknown to the Church of Christ, the old ritual having happily become obsolete. But the essential idea of it remains and will never disappear. Before we draw near to God in public worship it becomes us to make preparation answering to the purification of the older time. There is—

I. THE PREPARATION OF THE BODY. Our Lord said there was a certain "kind" of evil which could only be expelled after prayer *and fasting* (Matt. xvii. 21). We must recognize the fact that one bodily condition is much more favourable to pure and sustained devotion than another; *e.g.* a wakeful rather than a somnolent one; a wisely and moderately nourished state in preference to one incapacitated by indulgence on the one hand or by prolonged abstinence on the other. Not in weariness and exhaustion, nor yet in a disabling and unfitting fulness, should we bring our offering of prayer or praise, of exhortation or docility, unto the house of the Lord.

II. THE PREPARATION OF THE MIND. They who have undertaken the sacred task of speaking for God should surely prepare for this high and exalted work. If we carefully prepare to speak in our own name, how much more should we do so when we speak in his! Should we not gather all the knowledge we can anywise obtain, think our subject through to the best of our ability, search the Scriptures to sustain the truth we are to utter by the Word of God, lay all our mental acquisitions and information under contribution to give clearness and cogency to our argument or appeal, order and arrange our thoughts that we may present them as freely and as forcibly as we can?

III. THE PREPARATION OF THE HEART. This preparation, more than that of the body or the mind, answers to the purification described in the text. Our hearts need to be "cleansed and purged" (ver. 20). It has to be cleansed from: 1. All self-seeking; so that we aim, not at our own honour or advancement, but at the glory of Christ and the good of men. 2. All worldliness and vanity; so that when we bow in prayer or assume the attitude of attentiveness we are not lost in the remembrance or the anticipation of bargains in the market or of pleasures in society. 3. The search for enjoyment rather than the seeking after God; the temptation to come to the house of the Lord to partake of that which is sweet unto our taste rather than that which is strengthening to our character and nourishing to our soul. Such preparation or purification as this must be wrought in the secret chamber of devotion, when we are alone with God, in solemn contemplation and in earnest and believing prayer.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The prophet, having finished his account of the temple, or place of worship, proceeds, in the second section of his vision (ch. xliv.—xlvi.), to set forth the cultus, or ritual, to be performed in the temple; treating first of the several classes in the new community, and of their relation to the sanctuary (ch. xliv.); next of the regu-

lations to be observed in the maintenance of worship (ch. xlv.); and, thirdly, of certain supplementary orders for the prince, the people, and the priests, when engaged in the solemnities of their religion (ch. xlvi.). In particular, the present chapter deals (1) with the relation of the prince to the sanctuary (vers. 1—3); (2) with that of the people, Levites, and priests (vers. 4—16); and (3) with the duties and emoluments of the priests (vers. 17—31).

Vers. 1—3.—*The relation of the prince to the sanctuary.*

Ver. 1.—**The gate of the outward sanctuary**—or, *the outer gate of the sanctuary* (Revised Version)—**which looketh toward the east.** To this door the prophet was conducted back, by way of the inner north or south gate, from the inner court, in which he had received the measurements of the altar and the instructions for its consecration (ch. xliii. 5). Whether Ezekiel stood upon the outside of this door, as in ch. xliii. 1, or upon its inside, cannot as yet be determined; but in either case he observed that it was **shut**—again, whether on the east side towards the temple precincts, or on the west towards the outer court, is not mentioned, and cannot at this stage be decided. What led the seer to notice that the gate was closed was probably the circumstance that the last time he stood beside it it was open (ch. xliii. 1), though proof cannot be given that he passed through it (ch. xliii. 5), conjoined with the fact that it formed the principal entrance to the temple, and as such had been described to him and measured (ch. xl. 6).

Ver. 2.—**This gate shall be shut.** The prophet must have noted this as an important difference between the new sanctuary and the old (whether temple or tabernacle), in which the east gate stood always open. That the gate of the new temple was to be closed only on the six working days Ewald mistakenly infers from ch. xlvi. 1, where he reads, after the LXX., the outer instead of the inner court. But ch. xlvi. 1 refers to the east gate of the inner court. Of the east gate of the outer court it is declared emphatically that it **shall not be opened, neither shall any man enter in by it,** meaning that it should be closed in perpetuity; and that not, as Abarbanel and Lightfoot have supposed, to express the idea that the glory of Jehovah should no more depart from the temple, but abide in it for ever, but to inspire an exalted conception of the sanctity of the "house" and all its belongings, as Jehovah explained, **Because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut.**

Ver. 3.—**It is for the prince** conveys an erroneous impression, as if the edict, excluding all from passing through the east outer gate, did not apply to the prince; but even for him the gate was not to serve as a mode of entrance into the temple, or, if so, only on exceptional occasions (see on ch. xlvi. 2), but merely as a place to sit in. The Revised Version accurately renders the words, *As for the prince, he shall sit therein as prince*, etc. That the "prince" here alluded to (הַנָּשִׂיא) could not have been the Prince David, *i.e.* the Messiah already spoken of (ch. xxxiv. 23, 24; xxxvii. 24), but must have denoted the civic authorities of the new community of Israel, "the civil head of the theocracy," Hävernick infers from ch. xlv. 8, 9, where the coming "prince" is contrasted with Israel's previous rulers who oppressed their subjects, from the absence of some such characteristic predicate as "shepherd" or "king," which would, he thinks, have been attached to the word "prince" had it been intended to designate Messiah, from the prince's offering for himself a sin offering (ch. xlv. 22), from the allusion to his sons (ch. xlvi. 16), and from what is recorded about his behaviour in worship (ch. xlvi. 2); but none of these statements concerning the "prince" forbids his identification with Messiah, unless on the supposition that it was already understood Messiah should be a Divine-human Personage. This, however, had not then been so distinctly revealed as to be widely and accurately known. Hence it seems enough to say that while the "prince" would have his highest antitype in the Messiah, he would also have, though in a lower and lesser degree, an antitype in every righteous ruler (if ever there should be such) who might subsequently preside over Israel (see on ch. xxxvii. 25). The phrase, **to eat bread before the Lord,** while referring in the first instance to those sacrificial meals which, under the Law, commonly accompanied unbloody offerings, as the meat offerings (Lev. ii. 3), the shewbread (Lev. xxiv. 9), and the unleavened loaves of the Passover (Exod. xii. 18; Lev. xxiii. 6; Numb. xxviii. 17; Deut. xvi. 3), and could only be partaken of by the priests, in the second instance signified to partake of sacrificial meals in general, even of such as consisted of the portions of flesh which were eaten in connection with ordinary bloody offerings (Gen. xxxi. 54; Exod. xviii. 12). If, after Kliefoth, the former be adopted as the import of the phrase here, then the thought will be that in the new cultus the prince should enjoy a privilege which under the old was not possessed

even by the king; if, after Keil, the second view be preferred, the sense will amount to this, that under the regulations of the future the prince should have the favour accorded him "of holding his sacrificial meals in the gate," whereas the people should only be permitted to hold theirs "in the court," or "in the vicinity of the sacrificial kitchens." **The way of the porch** is mentioned as the ingress and egress for the prince; which implies that he should obtain access to the outer court by either the north or the south gate, since the outer door of the east gate was shut. This renders it probable that Ezekiel was himself standing on the outside of the east gate (see on ver. 1).

Vers. 4—16.—*The relations of the people, Levites, and priests to the sanctuary.*

Ver. 4.—From the outside of the east gate of the outer court the prophet was brought **the way of the north gate**, but whether of the outer or of the inner is uncertain, and set down **before the house**. On the ground that the prophet at his new station was in front of the temple, Hitzig, Keil, and others decide for the north gate of the inner court; whereas Kliefoth, looking to the circumstance that the first communications made to the prophet at his new post concerned "the entering in of the house," and "the going forth of the sanctuary," prefers the north gate of the outer court. But at whichever of the gates the prophet was set down he perceived a second time (comp. ch. xliii. 5) **that the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord**, and this, perhaps, should cast the balance in favour of the inner court entrance, from which the interior of the "house" could be more easily seen.

Ver. 5.—Having fallen on his face before the renewed theophany, the prophet was summoned as once before (ch. xl. 4), but with greater emphasis than before, to **mark well**, or *set his heart* to observe, the communications about to be made to him **concerning all the ordinances of the house of the Lord, and all the laws thereof** (see on ch. xliii. 11), more especially with regard to the persons who should have a right to participate in its services.

Ver. 6.—**Let it suffice you of all your abominations.** It was not without significance that at the north gate, which had formerly been represented as the scene of Israel's idolatries (ch. viii. 5), the prophet should be reminded of those past iniquities of his nation, and receive instructions as to how the new community should be preserved from lapsing into similar transgressions.

Ver. 7.—The special sin chargeable against Israel in the past had been the introduction into the sanctuary, while the priests were engaged in sacrifice, of strangers —*aliens* (Revised Version); literally, *sons of a stranger*—**uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh**, in express contravention of Jehovah's covenant. Ewald, Hävernick, Hengstenberg, Schröder, and Currey restrict the designation "strangers" to unfaithful and unauthorized priests, who, as in the days of Israel's apostasy, notoriously under Jeroboam (1 Kings xii. 31; 2 Chron. xi. 15), may, in the confluence of idolatries that took place in Jerusalem during the reigns of Ahaz (2 Kings xvi. 3, 4, 10—15; 2 Chron. xxviii. 2—4, 23—25) and Manasseh (2 Kings xxi. 2—7, 11, 15; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 2—7), have been admitted to participate in the temple services; but Kliefoth, Delitzsch, Keil, Smend, and Plumptre, with better judgment, recognize in the "strangers" foreigners who had not incorporated themselves with Israel by submitting to circumcision, but, though dwelling in the midst of Israel, were still uncircumcised heathen in both heart and flesh. With regard to these foreigners, the Law of Moses (Lev. xvii. 8, 10) enacted that, by accepting circumcision, they might become members of the Israelitish commonwealth, but that without this they could not be permitted to partake of the Passover, the highest symbol of national and religious unity (Exod. xii. 48, 49). Nevertheless, it was open to them, on giving a certain measure of obedience to the Law (Exod. xii. 19; xx. 10; Lev. xvii. 10, 12; xviii. 26; xx. 2; xxiv. 16, 22), to enter the sanctuary and present all sorts of offerings to Jehovah (Lev. xvii. 8; Numb. xv. 14, 29). Hence Israel's offence had not been the admission of such "sons of the stranger" into the sanctuary, but the admission of them without insisting on the above specified conditions, in other words, the admission of such as not only lacked the bodily mark of circumcision—which would not have excluded them—but were destitute as well of the first elements of Hebrew piety, *i.e.* were as uncircumcised in heart as they were in the flesh. The sanctioning of such within the temple courts, while Jehovah's bread, the fat and the blood, was being offered, *i.e.* while sacrificial worship was being performed, was not simply a desecration of the "house," but was an express violation of the covenant Jehovah had made with Israel with reference to these very "sons of the stranger."

Ver. 8.—Instead of having exercised a holy solicitude for the purity of the temple and the regularity of its rites, by keeping strict watch over **the holy things** of Jehovah, the house of Israel had set keepers; literally, *had set them*, i.e. the uncircumcised

"strangers" above referred to, *as keepers* of Jehovah's charge in his sanctuary for themselves, *i.e.* to please themselves, irrespective altogether of Jehovah's enactments. From this it has been argued, by Wellhausen, Smend, Driver, and others, that the "strangers" above mentioned had been not only allowed access to the outer court as spectators or as worshippers while the priests were offering sacrifice, but admitted to the inner court as assistants to the priests in their altar duties, that this, the employment of these heathen hierodules, had been the special wickedness of which Israel had been guilty, and that henceforward these "foreign ministers" were to be thrust out from their offices, and their places supplied by the about-to-be-degraded Levites. It is, however, doubtful if the phrase, *keepers of my charge in the sanctuary*, can be made to signify more than has already been expressed by the clause, "to be in my sanctuary . . . when ye offer my bread" (ver. 7), by which, as Kliefoth and Keil explain, Israel had practically made these strangers "keepers of Jehovah's charge," *i.e.* observers of the rites of worship prescribed by him, though observers in their way, not in his; if more can be extracted from the words, then the most they can be legitimately made to affirm (as there is no mention of the inner court) is that these "strangers," in addition to obtaining access to the outer court to witness the sacrifices, or perhaps offer such for themselves, had been more or less frequently employed in performing subordinate offices towards the Levites, who were the proper priests' assistants, like the Gibeonites, whom Joshua (ix. 27) made "hewers of wood and drawers of water for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord unto this day," and like the Nethinim, whom, according to Ezra (viii. 20), David and the princes had given for the service of the Levites (see Delitzsch, Luthardt's 'Zeitschrift für kirchliche Wissenschaft,' 1880, p. 283). (On the phrase, "to keep the charge of Jehovah," as signifying to follow his directions or comply with his prescriptions, see Numb. ix. 23.) "In the sanctuary" explains that the prescriptions alluded to were those pertaining to the sanctuary or to the worship of Jehovah.

Vers. 9—16.—Accordingly, that no such abuses might creep in to desecrate the temple of the future, a new Torah was promulgated concerning the persons who should have a right to participate in its services. If the "prince" is omitted, the reason probably was that a special section is subsequently devoted to him (ch. xlvi. 1—8).

Ver. 9.—*The ordinance for the people.* **No stranger** (or, *alien*), **uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary.** The publication of this edict marked a clear advance upon preceding legislation. The old Torah conceded right of access to a foreigner, though uncircumcised, on certain conditions (ver. 7); this new Torah would accord such right of access to a foreigner on no conditions. Even should he be circumcised in the flesh, unless he possessed also that which the bodily mark symbolized, viz. circumcision of heart, he must remain without. Does not this look as if Ezekiel were posterior to the priest-code, rather than *vice versâ*, as Wellhausen contends?

Vers. 10—14.—*The ordinance for the Levites.* According to the so-called priest-code, the Levites were Levi's descendants, who were chosen by Jehovah for service in the tabernacle (Numb. iii. 6—13; xvi. 9), to minister to the priests when these sacrificed in the tabernacle (Numb. viii. 19; xviii. 6), and in particular to keep the charge of the tabernacle, *i.e.* of the house and all its vessels (Numb. i. 53), as distinguished from the charge of the sanctuary and of the altar, which pertained to Aaron and his sons alone as priests (Numb. xviii. 2—6, 23). The Deuteronomic code, says Wellhausen ('Geschichte Israels,' pp. 121, etc.), was unacquainted with any such distinction between Levites and priests, who, it is alleged, composed one homogeneous body, the tribe of Levi, whose members were equally empowered to officiate at the altar (Deut. x. 8), the lower duties of the tabernacle having been performed by the aforesaid "strangers," and the subordination of Levites to priests having first been suggested by Ezekiel (comp. Smend, 'Der Prophet Ezekiel,' p. 361, "*Der unterschied zwischen Priestern und Leviten ist hier im Enstehn begriffen*"), and first formally carried out after the exile. This theory, however, cannot be admitted as made out in face of (1) Deut. xviii., which (ver. 1) recognizes "the priests" and "the Levites" as constituting "the whole tribe of Levi," and (vers. 3, 6) distinguishes between "the priest" and "the Levite;" (2) 2 Sam. xv. 24, which associates with Zadok the priest, the Levites as carriers of the ark; (3) 1 Kings viii. 4, in which the same distinction between the two bodies is recognized; (4) 1 and 2 Chron., *passim*, which attest the existence of priests and Levites as separate temple officials in pre-exilic times; and (5) Ezra i. 5, 62; iii. 8, 10; vi. 20, which show that the distinction, alleged to have been first made by Ezekiel, was well known to the first company of exiles who returned under Zerub-

babel to Jerusalem, and was by them traced back to pre-exilic times (see Keil, on Deut. xviii. 1; Curtiss's 'Levitical Priests,' pp. 22, etc.; Delitzsch, in Luthardt's 'Zeitschrift für kirchliche Wissenschaft,' pp. 286, etc., and in Riehm's 'Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Alterthums,' art. "Leviten;" Oehler, in Herzog's 'Real-Encyclopädie,' art. "Levi"). The question, therefore, of which Levites Ezekiel speaks in this verse, whether of those whose duties were of a menial order or of those whose functions partook of a priestly character, is not difficult to resolve. It could hardly have been the former, since in vers. 11—14 Ezekiel's Levites are represented as about to be degraded by being relegated to inferior tasks than those they had formerly performed; it must have been the latter, because in the present verse they are designated **the Levites that are gone away** (or, *went*) **far from me, when Israel went astray.** Now, Israel's apostasy from Jehovah and declension towards idolatry began with Solomon's unfaithfulness (1 Kings xi. 4—8), and continued with greater or less intensity in every subsequent reign till the exile; it certainly cannot be restricted, as Keil and Currey propose, to Jeroboam's conduct in setting up rival sanctuaries in Dan and Bethel, with altars and priests, for the accommodation of the northern kingdom (1 Kings xii. 26—33). Nor is there room for doubting, although historical notices of the fact are not abundant, that in this apostasy the priesthood largely led the way (Jer. xxvi. 7, 11; 2 Kings xvi. 11—16; Zeph. i. 4), becoming priests of the high places, ministering for the people at heathen altars, and so causing them to fall into iniquity (ver. 12). Hengstenberg and Plumptre suggest that the reason why these apostate priests are now called Levites was to intimate that they were no more worthy of the priesthood, and were about to be reduced to the lower ministry of the Levites so called. Consequently, under the new Torah, those among the priests (who were also Levites) who had been guilty of this flagrant wickedness (*i.e.*, says Delitzsch, all the Aaronides who were not Zadokites) would no more, either in themselves or their descendants, be suffered to retain the priestly office, but would be degraded to the status of ordinary Levites, and, like them, should be **ministers in Jehovah's sanctuary, having charge**—or, *oversight* (Revised Version)—**at the gates of the house, and ministering to** (or, *in*) **the house,** *i.e.* in its courts, serving as keepers of the charge of the house (ver. 14), as watchers at the gates of the house (ver. 11), as slaughterers of the sacrificial victims (ver. 11), but should not, like their brethren who had remained faithful, be allowed to do the office of a priest, *i.e.* approach the altar to offer sacrifice, or to enter into the holy place (ver. 13). In this way they should **bear their iniquity** (vers. 10, 12)—a favourite expression in the middle books of the Pentateuch (Exod. xxviii. 38, 43; Lev. v. 1; x. 17; xx. 19; Numb. v. 31; xviii. 1), but never occurring in Deuteronomy, and meaning "to be requited" on account of, and make expiation for, sin and **their shame and their abominations,** *i.e.* the shame due to them for their abominations—a specially Ezekelian phrase (comp. ch. xvi. 52, 54; xxxii. 30; xxxvi. 7).

Vers. 15, 16.—*The ordinance for the priests.* That Ezekiel derived the phrase, **the priests the Levites,** from Deuteronomy (xvii. 9; xviii. 1; xxiv. 8; xxvii. 9) may be granted without admitting that the Levites were all priests, or that the phrase had other import than that the priests were, as the Deuteronomist says, "sons of Levi" (xxi. 5; xxxi. 9). The priesthood, at its institution, having been entrusted to Aaron and his sons (Exod. xxvii. 20, 21; xxviii. 1—4; xxix. 9, 44; Numb. iii. 10; xvi. 40; xviii. 7; xxv. 13), on Aaron's death the high priesthood passed into the hands of Eleazar, his eldest (living) son (Numb. xx. 26—28), and after Eleazar's death into those of Phinehas, his eldest son (Numb. xxv. 11—13). In the last days of the judges, when the ark and tabernacle stood at Shiloh, the high priesthood belonged to Eli, of the line of Ithamar (comp. 1 Sam. xiv. 3 and xxii. 20 with 1 Chron. xxiv. 3), in which line it continued till the reign of David, when it was held conjointly by Abiathar (called also Ahimelech) of the line of Ithamar, and Zadok of the line of Eleazar (2 Sam. viii. 17; xx. 25; 1 Kings iv. 4). This arrangement, however, Solomon eventually overturned, by deposing the former for espousing Adonijah's pretensions to the throne (1 Kings i. 7; ii. 26), and from that time forward till the exile the high priesthood remained with Zadok and his sons (1 Kings ii. 35; 1 Chron. xxix. 22). When, therefore, **it is announced to Ezekiel that his vision-sanctuary should have as priests the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of Jehovah's sanctuary, when the children of Israel went astray from him,** the first question that arises is—*To what does this allude?* Kliefoth holds it cannot mean that, while Israel as a whole declined into idolatry, the Zadokite priests remained faithful to the worship of Jehovah, because the vision of Judah's idolatries granted to the prophet, in ch. viii. 16, revealed quite clearly that the priesthood was as much caught in the national apostasy as were the princes or the people. Nor is the language of the text perfectly satisfied by the view of Häver-

nick, Keil, Delitzsch, and others, that it goes back to Zadok's fidelity to the throne of David at the time of Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. xv. 24—29), a fidelity exhibited also by Abiathar, or to his adherence to Solomon in preference to Adonijah (1 Kings i. 8, 39), this time without Abiathar's concurrence, rather in the face of his opposition. In neither of these instances was Zadok's fidelity specially directed towards Jehovah's sanctuary, but concerned expressly and exclusively David's throne. Hence the commendation of the Zadokites' fidelity can only signify that, while the priesthood as a body were corrupt like the people, there were among them, as among the people, some who, like Ezekiel, continued steadfast to Jehovah's sanctuary; that these faithful few were Zadokites (see ch. xlviii. 11), and that to these should be entrusted the priesthood in the new sanctuary. But, at this point, a second question starts—*Was it intended to declare that the new priesthood should be Zadokites in body*, i.e. in respect of lineal descent, *or only in soul*, i.e. in respect of moral and religious excellence? The former is contended by Knenen, Wellhausen, Smend, and others, who see in the vision-sanctuary a plan of the second, or post-exilic, temple, and in its ordinances a programme for the establishment of the Levitical hierarchy; but this contention shatters itself on the fact that no proof exists either that the second temple was constructed after Ezekiel's as a model, or that those who served in it were exclusively flesh and blood Zadokites. The latter opinion, favoured by Kliefoth, appears the more correct, that moral and spiritual resemblance to the sons of Zadok should form the first qualification for the priesthood in this ideal sanctuary of the future (see note at the end of ch. xlviii.).

Vers. 17—31.—*The duties and emoluments of the priests.*

Ver. 17.—Beginning with their attire when engaged in temple service, this verse states, in a general way, that the priests should be clothed with linen garments, as the priests were under the Law (Exod. xxviii. 40—43; xxxix. 27—29; Lev. vi. 10), with this difference, that whereas under the Law the terms employed were שֵׁשׁ, the white byssus of Egypt, and בַּד, "fine white linen," here the word is פִּשְׁתִּים, or "flax"—a difference which assists newer critics to perceive in the so-called priest-code a refinement on Ezekiel, and therefore an evidence that the priest-code arose later than Ezekiel. But if the so-called priest-code had already indicated that the linen for priests' garments should be of the finest quality, Ezekiel may have felt there was no occasion for him to use other than the generic term for "linen," which פִּשְׁתִּים (*pishteh*) seems to have been (comp. Lev. xiii. 47, 48, 52, 59; Deut. xxii. 11; Jer. xiii. 1). That this was so is suggested by the statement that no wool, צֶמֶר, "perhaps so called from its being shorn off" (Gesenius), should come upon them whiles they ministered in the gates of the inner court, or within the court itself, or the house—the contrast being between what was of vegetable and what was of animal production. The reason for the prohibition of wool is hinted at in ver. 18—it was apt to cause sweat, and thus entail impurity; the clean white linen, on the other hand, was designed both for hygienic reasons and as an emblem of purity (comp. Rev. xix. 8, 14).

Ver. 18.—In particular the priests should have linen bonnets upon their heads—literally, *linen tires shall be upon their heads*—and linen breeches upon their loins. To infer from the use of מִגְבָּעוֹת in Lev. viii. 13 and of פְּאֵר here for the head-dress of the priests, that Ezekiel was composed before Leviticus, is not convincing. Smend explains the latter term as the customary head-dress of common people, and the former as a specially ornamental tiara or turban. Gesenius reverses this meaning, making the former the ordinary round cap, and the latter a tiara (see for the former, Exod. xxviii. 40; xxix. 9; xxxix. 28; and for the latter, Exod. xxxix. 28; Isa. lxi. 10; ch. xxiv. 17, 23). In addition, the priests should not gird themselves with any thing that causeth sweat; literally, *should not gird themselves in*, or *with sweat*, which was another way of forbidding them to wear woollen clothing, which might cause them to sweat and so lead to uncleanness.

Ver. 19.—When the priests retired from the inner court, and before they passed into the outer court to mingle with the people, they were enjoined to lay aside their official robes, depositing them in the holy chambers already described (ch. xlii. 1—14), and to put on other, *i.e.* their ordinary, clothes (comp. Lev. vi. 11). The reason for this injunction was that they might not sanctify the people (comp. ch. xlvi. 20) through the people's coming in contact with their garments. These, being in a manner, *i.e.* ceremonially, holy, would impart to the people a levitical or ritualistic sanctity which would disqualify them, for a time, at least, from attending to the common duties of life, as under the Law those were who touched the sacrificial flesh (Lev. vi. 18, 27), the altar (Exod. xxix. 37), and the vessels of the sanctuary (Exod. xxx. 29).

Ver. 20.—The next rubric concerned the

mode in which the priests should wear their hair. It should neither be shaved nor worn long, thus avoiding excess on either side (compare for the first, Lev. xxi. 5; and for the second, Lev. x. 6; xxi. 10, Revised Version), but should merely be polled. The obligation to let the hair grow freely was imposed upon the Nazarite only during the period of his vow (Numb. vi. 5). The verb "to poll," or "cut" (כָּסַח), occurs nowhere else. Smend thinks what is here denied to the priests collectively is in the priest-code denied solely to the high priest (Lev. xxi. 10, Revised Version; compare, however, Lev x. 6, Revised Version), and discovers in this a sign of the later origin of Leviticus. Ezekiel's raising the priesthood as a body to the rank of the high priest, of whom in connection with this temple is no trace, rather proves Ezekiel to have been later than Leviticus.

Ver. 21.—The prohibition of wine to the priests when engaged in temple service accorded with Mosaic legislation (Lev. x. 9). Total abstinence at other times was not enjoined.

Ver. 22.—As to marriage (since the priests in Ezekiel's "house" were no more expected to be celibates than were those employed about Moses' tabernacle or Solomon's temple), they were forbidden to marry widows (which the Levitical priests were not, though the high priest was) or divorced women, and allowed to wed only virgins of the house of Israel, or (the sole exception) widows of such as had been priests (compare with the priest-code, Lev. xxi. 7, 13, 14). Ezekiel's enactment discovers two variations—first, that it does not formally forbid to the priests marriage with a harlot; and, second, that it sanctions marriage with a priest's widow. But the first was implied in the prohibition of marriage with an adulteress, and the second was a sign of the higher sanctity of the priesthood belonging to Ezekiel's temple. Hence, so far from indicating the priority of Ezekiel, it rather points to the priority of Leviticus.

Vers. 23, 24.—Among the priests' official duties four things are prescribed. (1) *The education of the people* in the fundamental principles of their religion, viz. that a distinction existed between the "holy" and "profane," or "common," and in the practical application of that principle, the art of discerning between the "unclean" and the "clean." This duty had been laid upon the priests of Mosaism (Lev. x. 10; Deut. xxiv. 8; xxxiii. 10), but in the last years of the monarchy had been neglected (ch. xxvi. 26; comp. Mal. ii. 7—9). (2) *The administration of justice* in all disputes arising out of and connected with the practice of their religion. This office had pertained to the priests under the Law (Numb. v. 14—31; Deut. xvii. 8—13; xix. 17; xxi. 5), and was exercised in pre-exilic times (Hos. iv. 6; Micah iii. 11; Isa. xxviii. 7; Jer. xviii. 18), though not always in accordance with Jehovah's judgments. That the juridical authority of the priests was purely of a moral kind (Wellhausen, Smend), can be maintained only by rejecting 2 Chron. xvii. 7—9 and xix. 5—11 as unhistorical. (3) *The regulation of all festal assemblies* in accordance with the Divine statutes. For errors in the celebration of these festivals, the priests should be answerable, as they had always been; only under the new *régime* there should be no errors. 4. *The hallowing of Jehovah's sabbaths.* This they should do both by resting on the seventh day and by offering the sabbath sacrifices, the shewbread, and the burnt offering; both of which things the priests under the Law had been commanded to do (see Exod. xx. 8—11; xxxi. 13—17; Lev. xxiii. 3; xxiv. 8; Numb. xxviii. 9), but had not done (ch. xx. 12, 13, 20, 21; xxii. 8; xxiii. 28).

Vers. 25—27.—Regulations are next given for preserving the priesthood from defilement through coming in contact with the dead, and for removing such defilement in case of its having been contracted. As under the Law, so in the ideal constitution of Ezekiel, the priests should not be at liberty to contract ceremonial impurity through touching a corpse except in the case of near relations (comp. Lev. xxi. 1—4). That neither in Leviticus nor in Ezekiel is the priest's wife among the excepted is surprising, and hardly to be explained, with Knobel, on the ground that a wife is not a blood-relation, since according to the Divine conception of marriage husband and wife are one (Gen. ii. 24), but either by holding, with Keil, that the wife, who stands nearer her husband than any of the relatives named, was viewed as included under the phrase, "and for his kin that is near unto him" (Lev. xxi. 2), or by supposing it self-evident that such defilement could not be avoided in the case of a wife and was therefore tacitly allowed. Smend, as usual, finds signs of Ezekiel's priority to the priest-code, first in the circumstance that Ezekiel regarded it as perfectly natural that a priest should sorrow for his wife (ch. xxiv. 15—18), which showed he had no acquaintance with Lev. xxi.; and secondly, in the fact that Lev. xxi. 11 prohibits absolutely to the high priest all contact with a corpse, which, it is argued, betrays a greater strictness than existed in the days of Ezekiel. But as the prohibition in Lev. xxi. 11 applies only to the high priest, who in Ezekiel's temple has no place, an argument as to which of the books had priority of origin cannot properly be founded on so

insecure a basis. Knobel remarks on Lev. xxi. 1—4 that "among the Greeks, priests and priestesses remained at a distance from funerals (Plato, 'De Legg.,' xii. p. 947); while among the Romans ought the *Flamen dialis* to touch no corpse (Gell., x. 15), the augur perform no funeral rites (Tacit., 'Ann.,' i. 31), and the pontifex accompany no funeral procession (Dio Cass., lvi. 31); not at all should he behold a dead body (Serv., 'Ad Æn.,' vi. 176), and in case he had occasion to pronounce a funeral oration, a curtain should hang between him and the corpse." As to the cleansing of a defiled priest, that should be conducted in accordance with the customary regulations (comp. Numb. xix.), with this difference—that on the termination of the ordinary rites, which extended over seven days, an additional seven days, according to Hävernick and Keil (though Hengstenberg and Plumptre decide for only one heptade), should elapse, at the end of which, on the presentation of a sin offering, he should be restored to service in the inner sanctuary.

Vers. 28—31 state the emoluments which should be enjoyed by the priests.

Ver. 28.—The Authorized Version conveys the impression that the first portion of the priests' sustenance should be derived from the sin offering, which is not mentioned till the following verse. **And it shall be unto them for an inheritance** ought rather to be rendered, *and there shall be to them* (what shall be) *for an inheritance;* or more simply, *and they shall have an inheritance* (Revised Version), which, it is next declared, as in the Law (Numb. xviii. 20; Deut. x. 9; xviii. 1, 2), should be Jehovah, and not any territorial possession or tribal tract such as should be assigned to the other tribes (see ch. xlviii.). Smend thinks Ezekiel was scarcely accurate in describing the priests as landless in the sense intended by the Deuteronomist and the priest-code, since in ch. xlv. 4 they are, after all, furnished with a plot of ground on which to build their houses and erect their sanctuary; whilst Wellhausen ('Geschichte Israels,' p. 165) holds the priest-code to have somewhat romanced in adopting the same language about the Aaronides and Levites, since, if they really did obtain forty-eight cities, "what were these if not a lot and a land tract, and that too a comparatively great and important one?" Neither view stands in need of refutation.

Ver. 29.—To the priests should be allocated, in addition, what already had been assigned them by the Law for their support, **the meat** (or, *meal*) **offering**, consisting of flour, corn, or bread (comp. Lev. ii. 1—16; vi. 16; Numb. xxviii. 12, 13), **and the sin offering** (see Lev. vi. 25—29; vii. 6; Numb. xviii. 9, 10), **and the trespass** (or, *guilt*) **offering** (comp. Lev. vii. 28—38), **and every dedicated** (or, *devoted*) **thing in Israel** (see Lev. xxvii. 21; Numb. xviii. 14). The burnt offering is omitted, because it was entirely consumed upon the altar, with the exception of the hide or skin, which under the Law became a perquisite of the officiating priest (Lev. vii. 8). That Ezekiel is silent about this, while the requirement of Lev. vii. 30, that the priest should obtain the breast with the right shoulder of every fire offering, goes beyond the prescription of Deut. xviii. 3, that the shoulder, two cheeks, and the maw should be the priest's portion, is regarded by Wellhausen and Smend as a proof that Ezekiel stands between Deuteronomy and the priest-code. But as Ezekiel does not condescend upon the particular parts which should be reserved from the fire offerings, it is impossible to say whether he held with the Deuteronomist or the writer of the priest-code, supposing them to be different; and, inasmuch as Lev. vii. 30 speaks of an offering by fire that was first paid to Jehovah and by him afterwards handed over to Aaron and his sons, while Deut. xviii. 3 treats of the dues which should be paid by the people directly to the priests, it is clear that both practices may have existed together instead of the one (the former) coming in as an advance upon the other (the latter); see Keil on Deut. xviii. 3.

Ver. 30.—A further portion of the priests' emoluments is stated as **the first of all the firstfruits of all** things—or, *of everything* (Revised Version), as *e.g.* of corn, oil, must, and wool—**and every oblation** (תְּרוּמָה)—or, *heave offering*—**of all**—or, *of everything*—with **the first of** the people's **dough**; or, *coarse meal;* which again re-echoes the provisions of the Law, the first of the firstfruits being specified in Exod. xxiii. 19; xxxiv. 26; Numb. xviii. 13; Deut. xviii. 4; the oblation, or *terumah* (Hebrew), in Numb. xv. 19; xviii. 19; and the dough, or coarse meal, or groats, in Numb. xv. 20, 21. Ezekiel's supposed (Wellhausen, Smend) silence as regards the firstlings of cattle, which in the book of the covenant (Exod. xxii. 29) and in the Deuteronomist (Deut. xv. 19) are to be eaten by the offerer, but in the priest-code (Numb. xviii. 21) belong to the priests, is imaginary. The first of all the firstfruits of everything cannot surely mean of everything except cattle. If Ezekiel does not give the tenths of the tithes to the priests, he still assigns them to the sanctuary (see ch. xlv. 14).

Ver. 31.—The commandment of the Mosaic Law is here renewed against eating the flesh of any fowl or beast that had either died a natural death or been mangled in

the killing (comp. Lev. xvii. 15; xxii. 8)—a commandment which, while enjoined specially upon the priests (Lev. xxii. 8), was equally binding upon all (Exod. xx. 31; Deut. xiv. 21).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 2, 3.—*The shut gate.* The "Golden Gate" at Jerusalem, on the eastern side of the temple area, looking towards the Mount of Olives, is now built up, so that it can only be traced by means of the form of the arches and carved work embedded in a line of wall. Tradition associates this now inaccessible archway with the gate which Ezekiel said should be shut till the Prince passed through it. There is a striking symbolism in Ezekiel's description of the shut gate.

I. THE GATE WAS SHUT. 1. *The way to God was closed.* Man once had free access to his Father. Sin barred the door and shut him out in the waste. 2. *The way to life was closed.* Cherubim with flaming swords, stood between Adam and the tree of life (Gen. iii. 24). Fallen man cannot recover his spiritual life; he has forfeited eternal life, and it is beyond his power to regain it. 3. *The way to happiness was closed.* The tree of life stood in Eden, and Eden was shut against fallen man. 4. *The way to heaven was closed.* The door was shut against the foolish virgins. The bliss of futurity is denied to man in his sin.

II. THE HOLINESS OF GOD BARS THE GATE. God had passed through the gate; therefore it was to be closed against man. This suggests a painful thought; where God is man may not be. The same idea was prominent at Horeb, when no man or beast was to come near the mount while God descended upon it (Heb. xii. 20). There is a natural feeling of the supreme majesty of God that leads to a thought of utter separateness. No being approaches him in greatness or rank. The Sovereign of all is alone in his awful majesty. Yet we must not associate vulgar ideas of pomp and ceremony with God. He does not need the artificial dignity of separateness. He is necessarily apart from us in sheer greatness. But he desires to be near to his children. The real secret of the separateness is sin. Man cannot come where God is because man is sinful and God is holy.

III. THE GATE IS OPENED FOR THE PRINCE. Christ, and Christ alone, realizes the Messianic vision of Hebrew prophecy. He is *the* Prince *par excellence.* Christ has a right of access to God by reason of his sinlessness, and by reason of his nature as "the Only Begotten of the Father." He has made a way to God by his intercession and his sacrifice. The door, long barred by sin, is now opened by grace. First our Prince goes through it, and himself realizes communion with God. But he does not keep this as a rare privilege for himself alone. He is the "Firstborn among many brethren," and he opens the door of access to God for all men. He leads all his people to the tree of life, for "he that hath the Son hath life" (1 John v. 12). He gives true blessedness to his people. He unbars the golden gate of heaven. All who sleep in Jesus will awake in the glorious resurrection-life of which he is the Source and Centre who could say, "I am the Resurrection and the Life" (John xi. 25).

Ver. 5.—*The attentive consideration of religious truth.* Ezekiel was to mark well the minute directions which were given to him concerning the temple. He was not a builder, and there is no reason to think that he was expected to consider these matters with a view to carrying out the work of constructing the new temple. But it was important that he should attend to the suggestiveness of every detail, because all that was here set forth was symbolical of spiritual truth. The smallest points of this truth should be considered with exactness, while every effort is made to grasp and comprehend it in its vast length and breadth.

I. RELIGIOUS TRUTH IS WORTHY OF ATTENTIVE CONSIDERATION. Great attention is required for a man's business if that is to be made successful. Politics absorb the thoughts of those who are much engaged in them. Pleasure, and what is called "sport," command earnest attention. Is it right that these things should occupy all a man's faculties, and that religion should be treated in an off-hand style as not worth much thought? Yet the conduct of multitudes would suggest that this supreme

interest could be sufficiently considered by occasional and listless attendance at public worship. But note how important it is. 1. It concerns *God*. Surely he—Maker of all things, Ruler of the universe, "in whom we live and move and have our being," our Father and our God—is worthy of some thoughtful attention. 2. It concerns *our duty*. The chief thing to be thought of is what we ought to do. To give much attention to our worldly interests and pleasures, and to treat our duty with thoughtless indifference, is to show shameful negligence of what is supremely important to us. 3. It concerns *our eternal welfare*. Religion is a matter of life and death. Its truth embraces eternity. When the petty affairs of this brief life are forgotten, its mighty issues will still proceed to work our highest blessedness or our utter destruction.

II. RELIGIOUS TRUTH NEEDS ATTENTIVE CONSIDERATION. It is not to be taken in with indolent ease. A man cannot comprehend his Bible at a glance, as he would his newspaper. Religious truth requires thought for several reasons. 1. *It is remote from our common experience*. It should not be so; but sin has introduced an entirely different train of ideas. We require an effort to bring thoughts of religion vividly to mind. 2. *It is concerned with great mysteries*. We can never understand it perfectly; but there is room in it for the explorations of the greatest minds. We must never forget, indeed, that its most precious pearls are for simple, childlike minds; that God has revealed to babes what he has hidden from the wise (Matt. xi. 25). But who give such absorbing attention to what interests them as children? We just need the child's whole-hearted listening, as when he drinks in a tale, every detail of which he pictures to himself in his fresh imagination.

III. RELIGIOUS TRUTH SHOULD RECEIVE ATTENTIVE CONSIDERATION. We now come to the practical point—How are we to give full attention to this great subject? Ezekiel suggests three ways. 1. *We must fix attention*. "Mark well." The mind tends to float away from difficult subjects. The anchor to hold it is some keen interest. The love of truth, or, better, the love of Christ, should serve as such an anchor. 2. *We must look into truth*. "And behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears." We must, so to speak, visualize truth. To make it real we must see it before us. But first we must look for it. There is a seeing and hearing by experience that is better than all indirect testimony. As soon as we thus come into personal contact with truth it is likely to be interesting to us. Then it is a real thing. Above all, it is well to follow the Greeks, who "would see Jesus," and by living experience to know him for ourselves.

Ver. 6.—*A sufficiency of sin*. I. OBSERVE IN WHAT THE SUFFICIENCY OF SIN CONSISTS. All sin is in excess of what it should be, for no sin is permissible. How, then, can there be such a thing as a sufficiency of it? We may regard this as an ironical idea, or as a thought that is useful in the *argumentum ad hominem*. It is as though a man had said he must have some sin, and now the question is raised—Has he not had enough? Those who sin greatly may be said to have had more than enough—to have attained what St. James calls "a superfluity of naughtiness" (Jas. i. 21). The sufficiency of sin may be tested in three ways. 1. *By its magnitude*. What more can the sinner desire? Would he still add to his enormous pile of guilt? Surely no mortal man could crave a heavier account. 2. *By its fruits*. The pleasures of sin soon cloy, and the foolish slave of vice has to turn from one to another form of evil to whet his jaded appetite. One would have thought that he had got his surfeit. Is there yet more pleasure to be extracted from the rotten root of sin? Certainly the more it is drawn upon the less really enjoyable are its products. 3. *By its penalties*. All this sin must be paid for, and the time of reckoning is at hand. Is not the sin already committed enough to have to answer for? It will be a heavy account as it is, if no more be added.

II. CONSIDER HOW THE SUFFICIENCY OF SIN IS TO BE TREATED. 1. *It should not be increased*. It is great enough; let us add no more to it. This awful tale of guilt can never be met; it would be madness to proceed still further in piling up accusations against one's self. 2. *It should be regarded with profound penitence*. There are not many things of which the sinner is full. In regard to his better nature he seems to be a helpless bankrupt. Indeed, he has but one perfect thing—his sin. He is rich only in one commodity—wickedness. Surely the consciousness of such a state of affairs

should overwhelm him with grief and shame. 3. *It should be brought to God for pardon.* Man cannot undo the past, nor can he compensate for the many misdeeds he has committed. Were his sin but small, it would still be impossible for him to atone for it. With a fulness of sin to account for, there can be no possibility for hope in man alone. But great as man's sin is, the love of God is even greater. Heavy as is his guilt, the merits of Christ outweigh it all. Thanks be to God, the sufficiency of man's sin is met by the sufficiency of Christ's atonement. The sin was great to require the death of the Son of God; but since Christ has died for it, the supreme work of redemption has been accomplished. Even a surfeit of past sin is now no barrier to God's full pardon of his penitent children.

Ver. 8.—*Religion by proxy.* The people had neglected their own duty in regard to the worship of God, and had appointed hirelings to discharge the sacred offices in their stead. This was a case of trying to practise religion by proxy. We often see the attempt made in various ways now, but it is doomed to failure.

I. THE ATTEMPT TO SATISFY THE CLAIMS OF RELIGION BY PROXY. There are now many Jews in Jerusalem kept in idleness by their more wealthy brethren in Europe, who hope by this expedient to secure for themselves the merit of living and dying in the Holy City, without undergoing the irksome experience of actual residence. In Roman Catholic countries it is common to devote a sum of money to the payment of the priest who is to say so many Masses on behalf of a person. Among ourselves there is an unconfessed but common notion that the minister in some way performs the offices of religion on behalf of the people, who stand by as idle spectators, and yet enjoy the fruits of his vicarious service. The development of elaborate ritual and the cultivation of highly ornate choral services tend in this direction, by taking the acts of worship out of the grasp of the people, and consigning them to the clergy and choir. Where this is not the case, there is a common feeling that the mere attendance at church when a service is being conducted is of some religious efficacy, the officiating minister carrying on the real worship on behalf of the congregation, which may be listless and indifferent, so long as he discharges his duty faithfully. Or perhaps the religion by proxy is attempted in the way of money payments. The rich man who will make no moral sacrifice, and who is unwilling to worship God or serve him, subscribes to charities and Missionary Societies, and consoles himself by the thought that he is supporting religion and other good works. He is not a pillar of the church within the sacred building, but he is a sort of buttress outside it. By this indirect service of a money payment he thinks to compound for his irreligion. Lastly, living in a Christian land, belonging to a Christian home, and having Christian associates are regarded as matters of some religious value by people who possess no real religion of their own. Thus they too would be religious by proxy.

II. THE UTTER FUTILITY OF THIS ATTEMPT. Every man must have his own personal dealings with God. There are such things as mediation, intercession, and vicarious sacrifices. The good mother is spiritually helpful to her children. Christ's righteousness, his obedience, and his sacrifice are for the good of the world. But none of these things will compensate for irreligion in those who would avail themselves of their advantages. Moreover, God looks to the heart. Money gifts not offered by a grateful, devout heart, but only paid in fines to exonerate a man from the consequences of his misdeeds and negligences, are of no value whatever in the sight of God. There is no merit in helping the religion of other people if no right motive inspires the action. The very desire to be religious by proxy reveals a wrong state of the heart, for it shows that those people who experience it have no love for God and no real inclination for religion. The man whose heart is right with God will not wish to be religious by proxy. The son who has true affections will have no inclination to pay a substitute to take his place in the family circle. When his heart is renewed the Christian is most eager to be near to God, for then worship is glad and spontaneous.

Ver. 9.—*The exclusion of the stranger.* There was a strict exclusiveness about the Hebrew religion. Only the circumcised were to share in its privileges. In regard to outward ordinances and national distinctions, this exclusiveness is destroyed by Christ,

and his gospel is free to Gentile as well as Jew, to the uncircumcised as well as the circumcised (Gal. v. 6). Nevertheless, in spite of the new breadth of Christianity, the ideas suggested by the old, narrow exclusiveness still obtain, though now only in spiritual relations.

I. THE STRANGER TO GOD IS EXCLUDED FROM THE PRIVILEGES OF RELIGION. It matters not what nation he belongs to; now we have to do with spiritual, not national distinctions. Thus it is possible that the Jew or the Christian may be a stranger to God, while the Gentile and one of a heathen nation may really know and love God. But where the distinction is it does involve serious consequences. It is a mistake to treat a Christian nation as though all its citizens enjoyed the favour of Heaven; and it is a mistake to address a Christian congregation as though all its members were devout men and women. Now, so long as a man is alienated from God, he is excluded from all the highest blessings of the gospel. The door of heaven is shut against the hard, the worldly, the impenitent. Surely some Church discipline should be exercised in regard to those whose alienation from God is undisguised. To keep up the name of Church-fellowship with people in this unhappy condition is to delude them with false hopes.

II. THE UNCIRCUMCISED IN HEART ARE STRANGERS TO GOD. Even in the directions that concern the old Jewish ritual this class is named as well as that of the uncircumcised in flesh. The one great question is as to the state of a man's heart. The uncircumcised heart is given up to sinful naturalism. Pure human nature should be fit for the presence of God, but sinful human nature is not. Unclean and degraded, it needs a spiritual circumcision before it can be accepted by God. In the state of sin man is thus far from God, and so excluded from the privileges of enjoying heavenly blessings. But the estrangement that results from this sinful condition involves a state of ignorance. Alienated from God, sinful man does not know his loss. He is out in the darkness, a heathen, though bearing the Christian name.

III. THE STRANGERS WHO ARE AS YET UNCIRCUMCISED IN HEART MAY BECOME TRUE PEOPLE OF GOD AND ENJOY THE PRIVILEGE OF ACCESS TO GOD. The hindrance must first be removed. 1. *There must be a change of heart.* The mischief is in the heart; thither the cure must be brought. Thus the first thing is for a man to pray that God would create in him a clean heart (Ps. li. 10). 2. *This can only be brought about by a Divine renewal,* which may be called the circumcision of the heart. God, and he only, can create, and we need to be new creatures in Christ Jesus. 3. *This may be realized through the gospel of Christ.* He has come to call in the strangers. By his great all-embracing love he reconciles "them that are afar off" as well as "them that are near." There are now no barriers which the grace of Christ cannot break through. It only remains for the strangers and uncircumcised in heart to avail themselves of that grace by penitent confession of sin and active trust in Christ.

Vers. 10—16.—*The degradation of the Levites.* From this interesting passage it would appear that there was a time when the Levites enjoyed free access to the altar, and were allowed to serve as priests before the Lord. But they had abused their privileges in admitting heathen people to the sacred enclosure, in doing their work by proxy, in even going aside to idolatry. Therefore they were degraded from their high functions —all of them except one family, that of Zadok. As the members of this family had remained true, the priesthood was now settled exclusively on them, while the rest of the Levites were put down to serve in secondary offices in connection with the temple ritual.

I. DISLOYAL SERVICE IS PUNISHED BY LOSS OF OFFICE. The unfaithful priest is deprived of his rank and ministry. Of Judas it was said, "His bishopric let another take" (Acts i. 20). The hireling may direct the flock for a season to his own advantage. Even the thief and the wolf may be in office. We cannot judge of a man's character by his rank, nor can we tell what is his position in the eyes of God by observing his ecclesiastical status. Much is expected of those to whom much has been given. Therefore the disloyal servant who stands in a high position will be most sternly judged. His first penalty will be loss of office. The man who had buried his talent is deprived of it (Matt. xxv. 28).

II. DEGRADED SERVANTS MAY BE PERMITTED TO DISCHARGE HUMBLER DUTIES. The Levites are not discharged; they are only put to lower offices. God inflicts no heavier penalties than are absolutely necessary. He bears no grudge against any of his servants. If we have failed in a more honourable position, we need not despair; there may be a lowly work which we can still perform. It must have been most painful for the Levites to be thus forced to take a lower place. Possibly at first they would rather have given up the whole temple service, and have devoted themselves to secular pursuits. It speaks well for them that they silently confessed the justice of what was done, and quietly took the lower place. It is hard, like John the Baptist, to step back and give way for a new man; hard to say, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John iii. 30). But he who has the cause of Christ at heart will be willing to do anything for the service of his Master. Many would be willing to take the rank of priests. The test is whether we will obey when we are called to the more humble work of the Levites.

III. THE DEGRADATION OF THE UNFAITHFUL IS ACCOMPANIED BY THE EXALTATION OF THE FAITHFUL. The loss of the Levites is the gain of the family of Zadok. The talent that is taken from the idle servant is given to the servant with ten talents. We may here see a hierarchy in the making. Merit and practical utility lie at the foundation of institutions that have subsequently become more formal. But merit and utility should always govern the appointment to office. There is no higher honour than to have been true in a time of general unfaithfulness.

Ver. 23.—"*The difference between the holy and profane.*" I. THERE IS A REAL DIFFERENCE. Men have been much concerned with wholly fictitious distinctions, and a most artificial line has been drawn between what has been accounted sacred and what has been regarded as profane. But this is only the abuse and the degeneracy of what should be discovered in its high and true condition as a genuine difference. The formal distinctions of the Jewish Law were all intended to symbolize moral and spiritual differences. Some of them were obviously concerned with matters of common cleanliness and decency; some had a more immediate bearing on sanitary laws; others, perhaps, were too suggestive of Jewish exclusiveness or conventional propriety; but even these latter regulations could not but impress upon the minds of thoughtful men the separateness of true holiness. The one real distinction is moral. It is the line of demarcation that separates sin from righteousness. This, and not the supposed distinction between the secular and the sacred, is the real difference between clean and unclean. St. Peter was taught to call none of the creatures of God common or unclean (Acts x. 15). It is not they that are so, but the uncleanness is in us, in our use of them. "Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Titus i. 15). Similarly, men make an artificial distinction between sacred and profane history. Coming from the pen of a Josephus, the history of Israel is profane; written by an Arnold, the history of Rome is sacred. He who sees God in history beholds a sacredness in it. To him who is worldly and untrue in heart all that he touches is profane.

II. THIS DIFFERENCE IS TO BE LEARNT BY SPIRITUAL EDUCATION. The priests were to teach the people the difference between the clean and the unclean. No doubt the elaborate external regulations of the Jewish Law required careful study, and men needed to be thoroughly instructed in regard to them, in order that they might avoid even unconscious offences. This was a necessary adjunct of a ceremonial religion. A religion of law needed lawyers for its priests. Now that system is wholly swept away. We live in the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and there is no need for us to be instructed in elaborate rules of ceremonial purification. Still, moral education is now needed, though in another direction. Conscience must be educated, so that it may be sensitive and keen to discern what is right, and separate this from what is evil. This education is not to be a drilling in casuistry, which would be a return to the old bondage of the Law; but it is to be an enlightening in regard to the great principles of Christian righteousness, and still more a quickening of the soul to feel the force of those principles, and to apply them without delay to every case as it arises. It is important that the religious teaching of children should be directed more to this end. One great function of the pulpit is to awaken men's sense of the great

distinction between sin and purity. We live too much by compromise. We need to learn more of the absolute claims of righteousness.

Ver. 28.—*Taking God as an Inheritance.* The priests were to have no share in the partition of the land. They were to be supported by means of the sacrificial offerings of the people; and in so living they were said to take God for their Inheritance. Viewing their position from the lowest point of view, we have the thought that they were dependent on what was dedicated to God, as their livelihood was derived from God's share of the produce of the land; a higher consideration would lead them to see that it was through God's relation to his people that they received their maintenance; and the highest view to which they could attain would be to regard God himself as their real Inheritance, and the sacrificial offerings merely as necessary means of living. Let us see how God may be regarded as an Inheritance and a Possession.

I. GOD MAY BE RECEIVED. An inheritance is not some distant territory that one simply knows of or beholds at a distance. We may believe in God, and even look towards him from afar, and yet not think of having any inheritance in him. But it is possible to have more close relations with him. 1. The inheritance is received as a *birthright.* The priests had a hereditary claim on their portion. All men are by nature children of God. By new birth we recover our original birthright. The Christian is an heir of God. 2. The inheritance is received *through death.* One dies, and another receives his inheritance. That was seen in Old Testament times in the succession of the priests. To us it is remarkable, as witnessed in the great fact that Christ died to give us our heavenly inheritance.

II. GOD MAY BE OWNED. When we receive God as an Inheritance, we take him as our Possession. There is thus a certain ownership in God established. But in the most complete way he owns us. How, then, can we also own God? There is a spiritual appropriation by which we personally accept God as our God, and hold to him in faith. It is much to be able to say from the heart, "O God, thou art my God!" All religion centres in that experience. The priests were to enjoy special Divine privileges in the Jewish system; all Christians are now to own God as their peculiar Possession.

III. GOD MAY BE ENJOYED. The inheritance is made use of and valued for what it gives, and on its own account. 1. When God is our Inheritance, *Divine blessings are our portion.* A rich inheritance contains many treasures—acres of fertile soil, well-timbered land, farms and orchards, perhaps mines and houses. He who takes God for his Portion has all the wealth of God to supply his need. It is true he may still receive but little of this world's goods; that is because God sees that it is best for him to be tried with poverty. But he will have a true sufficiency. If he trusts in God, and does what is right, he has the promise that he shall be fed (Ps. xxxvii. 3). Ultimately he will have great possessions. "All things are yours" (1 Cor. iii. 22). 2. *God is himself the greatest Blessing for his people.* The inheritance itself is more valuable than all that it is the means of procuring for us. To own God is to be rich indeed. When the Lord is our Portion we have a wealth of treasures for our souls. His presence, his love, his truth, his life, he himself dwelling within, make those who own him rich in the highest good.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*The prerogative of the prince.* The regulation prescribed in these verses is very remarkable, and is not free from difficulties. It appears that a peculiar sanctity attached to the eastern gate of the temple, owing to the fact that it was by this gate that the glory of the Lord entered, and by this same gate that the glory of the Lord had previously forsaken, the sacred precincts. To mark this sacredness, the gate was kept shut, and no one was permitted to pass through it, except the prince. He, as the head, the representative, the ruler, of Israel, was permitted to enter and to depart by this gate. And further, it was appointed that he should in this gateway eat bread—whether by this be meant the meat offering or the shewbread. This was a priestly privilege,

but it seems to have been shared by the prince, who, after the return from the Captivity, was not only the representative of the consecrated people, but also the representative of the promised Messiah. This singular prerogative suggests to our minds certain principles which have a special application to a religious community and state.

I. THE UNITY OF A RELIGIOUS AND CONSECRATED NATION IS PERSONIFIED IN A RELIGIOUS SOVEREIGN. David was not only the greatest of the Hebrew monarchs; he was the representative of the Hebrew monarchy and theocracy. In the prophets and in the later national religious literature, David appears as the ideal king, personifying the people of the covenant and foreshadowing the promised Messiah. And the "prince" of the people is, in this and other passages, regarded as the successor of the cherished son of Jesse. The prince is looked upon as worthy of his station, worthy of his illustrious and beloved predecessor. The true head of a great and religious people is that people's representative, not only before man, but before God.

II. THERE IS IMPLIED IN THIS PROVISION THE DIVINE ORIGIN AND CHARACTER OF POLITICAL AUTHORITY. There are some students of Scripture who find in the Word of God much relating to the authority of the Church, but who fail to remark the many assertions of the Divine authority of the state and of its officials and rulers. But it is very instructive for those in such a position to remark how, in this and similar passages, stress is laid upon the position and power of the prince. "The powers that be are ordained of God;" the state is as much Divine in its origin and sanction as is the Church. In the theocracy the monarch no doubt occupied a very special position. But religion certainly has for one of its functions the upholding of government as a Divine institution and of authority as a Divine principle. Independently of the form of government, and of the designation of the chief ruler of the state, it is for teachers of religion to follow the example of the scriptural writers in requiring justice from the governor and loyalty from the governed.

III. THE OBLIGATION IS APPARENT THAT THOSE IN AUTHORITY SHOULD CULTIVATE AND PRACTISE TRUE RELIGION. It is taken for granted by the prophet that the prince will appreciate and will use the prerogative here described. Nevertheless, it is probable that some who occupied the highest position in the nation were far from being truly devout and pious men. In every age and country men are found who come short of the ideal of their station. This, however, does not affect the fact that the occupation of a high position, the primacy of a great people, imposes upon a man a peculiar obligation to honour God, the Fountain of all authority and the Judge of every earthly sovereign. He who leads a people should lead them in the ways of righteousness and of piety.—T.

Ver. 4.—*Reverence.* The prophet was brought "the way of the north gate before the house," because it was thence that, on a previous occasion, he had been directed to gaze upon the provision for idolatrous worship which aroused the indignation of Jehovah. Instructions were about to be given which would be the means of preventing a repetition of the infamous defilement of God's holy place which in times past had taken place within the temple precincts. And that a suitable impression might be made, "the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord." It was upon this occasion that the prophet, filled with reverence and awe, fell upon his face.

I. THERE IS MISPLACED REVERENCE. 1. When men revere worldly greatness and splendour. 2. When men revere idols and deities, which are nothing but the work of their own hands and the invention of their own minds.

II. THERE IS JUSTIFIABLE AND BECOMING REVERENCE. Such was that felt and manifested by Ezekiel in the presence of the glory of the Lord. 1. The nature of man is capable of true and profound reverence. There is grovelling and degrading homage offered to men or to supposed supernatural powers—homage not worthy to be designated reverence. But man has the capacity of honouring the noblest and the best; and this is among the sublimest capacities of his nature. 2. The attributes, the character, of God deserve such reverence. The more the Eternal is studied, as manifested in his works and in his Word, the more will it be felt that he is the one fit Object of reverential regard and worship. The admonition of the angel addressed to the seer of the Apocalypse was just and is universally applicable, "Worship God!"

III. THERE IS APPROPRIATE EXPRESSION OF TRUE VENERATION AND ADORATION. A natural manifestation of reverence is that accorded in the text: "I fell upon my face."

The attitude of the body and the expression of the countenance are the natural revelation of the deep feelings of awe and veneration. A more articulate expression is the language of prayer and praise, which must indeed always be inadequate, which yet may in all conceivable circumstances be employed by the Church of Christ. All attitudes and all language are vain except as the manifestation of the deep feelings of the heart. Yet it is not possible for men to have a just view of God, to feel aright towards him, without presenting some audible or visible, some manifest expression of such thought and emotion. Man is both soul and body, and the movements, the attitudes, the utterances, of the bodily nature are the expressions of what is intellectual and spiritual. Whilst worship, to be acceptable, must be in spirit and in truth, they who are in the flesh will bow in reverence or kneel in supplication, will pour forth their gratitude in song, and their faith and adoration in petition and in praise.—T.

Ver. 9.—*The true circumcision and the true worshipper.* Provisions such as this were no doubt of an educational character, and were intended to teach the Israelites the necessity and the duty of holiness. The consecrated nation was called to present to Jehovah a pure offering. The alien was denied the privileges appointed for the Israelite; being uncircumcised, and not a child of the covenant, he was forbidden access to the holy place.

I. THE SANCTUARY WAS A SYMBOL OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE, FELLOWSHIP, AND FAVOUR. The Lord's holy temple was the scene of the especial manifestation vouchsafed by Jehovah to Israel. The Divine presence, naturally ubiquitous, was for a purpose localized. Here was, so to speak, the point of contact between the God of Israel and his chosen people; the media of communication being the sacrifices and services ministered by the consecrated priesthood. Here the acceptance and good will of Jehovah were sealed. They who conformed to Divine appointments were ceremonially justified and cleansed; and they who drew near with hearts prepared to receive a spiritual blessing were abundantly rewarded.

II. THE SELECTION OF THE CIRCUMCISED AND CONSECRATED, AND THE EXCLUSION OF THE UNCIRCUMCISED AND THE ALIEN, WERE SYMBOLICAL OF THE SPIRITUAL CONDITIONS OF ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP. No one can suppose that there was "favouritism" in the treatment of worshippers by the just, impartial God; we know that in every nation those who wrought righteousness were accepted. But so far as the temple at Jerusalem was concerned, there were regulations intended to draw attention to the character of true worship, and to the qualifications of acceptable worshippers. No doubt impure Israelites were admitted, and just and benevolent aliens were excluded. But all were taught the indispensable necessity of compliance with Divine regulations, and of the possession of prescribed qualifications. This provision was a preparation for the introduction amongst men of a higher and purer conception of true holiness, that which is not ceremonial, but real.

III. IN CHRISTIANITY WE HAVE THE FULFILMENT OF THE TYPE AND PROMISE OF THIS PREPARATORY DISPENSATION. The religion of Christ lays stress upon the new nature, the new heart, the new birth, the new life. It requires a cleansing, a putting off of the old nature, the circumcision of the spirit. It requires a naturalization in the new and Divine kingdom, a citizenship such as no physical birth and no external legislation can impart. A man must be born anew and from above in order to enter into the kingdom of God, of heaven. The conditions of acceptable worship at Jerusalem have to be translated into the language of spiritual reality in order to be applicable to the new dispensation.

IV. THE CONDITIONS OF ENTRANCE INTO THE HEBREW SANCTUARY WERE AN ANTICIPATION OF THE TERMS OF HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP. In this, as in so many passages, the prophecies of Ezekiel point on to the language of the Apocalypse, and the reader of the New Testament interprets these ancient declarations, prescriptions, and promises in the light of the closing book of the canon. The ceremonial preparation required of the Hebrew worshipper prefigured the qualifications laid down as a condition of admission into the celestial temple. Into the abodes of immortal purity there enters nothing that worketh abomination or maketh a lie. The citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem are renewed and purified and thus fitted for the privileges and occupations of the city whose Builder and Maker is God.—T.

Vers. 15, 16.—*Appointed ministrations.* The priests were an essential element in the Mosaic system, and their duties were prescribed with a precise exactness. After the Captivity, they still fulfilled their appointed duties, although their relative importance was probably diminished, whilst the scribes became growingly the religious leaders and teachers of the people. In the dispensation of the Spirit, the priesthood, so far as it is perpetuated, has been widened so as to include the whole Christian congregation.

I. MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH IS THE APPOINTMENT OF GOD. As the priesthood was instituted by Divine wisdom, so the will and pleasure of the great Head of the Church is that the members of the spiritual society should regard themselves as called by God to the fulfilment of varied duties as his servants.

II. MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH IS UPON THE PATTERN OF THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST THE HEAD. The Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister. The Lord was himself Servant of all, and those who are his are summoned to follow the example of him who declared that he was among his people as One who served.

III. MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH IS FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT. It is sometimes taken for granted that there are certain persons who minister to their fellow-Christians, whilst the rest simply receive and enjoy the advantages of their services. But in reality there is no one member of the true Church who is not commissioned for some special work which it is for him to do, who has not some gifts and opportunities for serving his fellow-disciples, for the edification of the body of Christ.

IV. MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH IS FOR THE SALVATION OF THE WORLD. The Jewish Church was restricted; the Christian Church has a universal mission—a mission for the benefit of mankind. They who have Christ's Spirit will live as disciples of him who said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself."

V. MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH INVOLVES ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD. With calling and gifts and influence there is associated responsibility. And this responsibility is to him who is the one, only, all-sufficient Judge and Lord. From this responsibility there is no escape; and it must ever be the aim and the hope of every Christian that he himself and his work may be acceptable and approved at last, when every man shall have praise of God.—T.

Ver. 23.—"*The difference between the holy and profane.*" It was one great office of the Jewish priesthood to instruct the people to discern between the unclean and the clean. No doubt this office was often discharged in a perfunctory manner; yet a valuable purpose was answered by the importance which the Israelites were thus encouraged to attach to obedience to the behests of the great King.

I. THERE IS AN ARBITRARY AND FACTITIOUS DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE HOLY AND THE PROFANE. Such is the distinction drawn in heathen communities, simply in the interests of the priests themselves, with no moral bearing or intention.

II. THERE IS A CEREMONIAL AND SYMBOLICAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE HOLY AND THE PROFANE. Such was the difference which was established by the Law given by Moses to the Israelites, and maintained by Divine command by the instrumentality of the priests of Jehovah.

III. THERE IS A SPIRITUAL AND REAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE HOLY AND THE PROFANE. It cannot be doubted that the ceremonial differences were intended to be the emblems of deeper and more real distinctions of a moral nature. In the Christian dispensation men were early taught upon the highest authority to call nothing common or unclean. But whilst Christ abolished distinctions, which were a means to an end, which served a temporary purpose of preparation, he emphasized those distinctions which, in the sight of a holy God, are real and important. Especially was this the case with the eternal difference between moral good and evil, between what is in accordance with, and what is repugnant to, the nature, the character, and the will of God. This distinction is one which the Church of Christ is bound to maintain, both by teaching and by conduct, before a sinful and disobedient world.—T.

Ver. 28.—*The Lord the Inheritance of his people.* There was a special sense in which the Lord was the Inheritance of the Levites and priests among the sons of Israel. A provision was made for them to compensate them for the lack of a territory such as was apportioned to the other tribes. Jehovah himself undertook the care of those who

ministered in his sanctuary; he was their Inheritance. This declaration is suggestive of a wider truth, viz. that God is the Portion and Inheritance of all his people.

I. THE LORD PROVIDES FOR ALL THE NEED, BOTH TEMPORAL AND SPIRITUAL, OF THOSE WHO TRUST IN HIM.

II. THE LORD IS THE JOY AND COMFORT OF THE HEARTS OF ALL WHO LOVE HIM.

III. THE LORD IS THE EVERLASTING PORTION OF ALL WHO SEEK AND SERVE HIM HERE.

APPLICATION. Such a declaration as this should assist those who profess themselves to be God's people to overcome the natural tendency to be anxious and careful concerning their temporal state and prospects. It should encourage them to set their affection upon things above—upon the true riches. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."—T.

Ver. 29.—*The devoted thing.* There were objects, both animate and inanimate, in connection with the worship and the sacrifices of the temple, which were in an especial sense dedicated and devoted to the Lord. By this provision, spiritual instruction was afforded, and religious reverence was encouraged. As in the Christian dispensation nothing is common or unclean, we are taught to regard everything that belongs to and is associated with the Christian as consecrated to the Lord.

I. ALL THAT THE CHRISTIAN HAS IS DEVOTED TO THE LORD IN VIRTUE OF WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE FOR HIM. 1. Everything is the Lord's gift. What have we that we did not receive? 2. Everything is redeemed by Christ, who, in giving himself a ransom for us, redeemed our possessions and our powers unto himself.

II. ALL THAT THE CHRISTIAN HAS IS DEVOTED TO THE LORD IN VIRTUE OF HIS CONSCIOUS SURRENDER AND DELIBERATE CONSECRATION OF HIMSELF TO HIS REDEEMING GOD. The dedication which the true Christian has made of himself to his Saviour is unreserved.

> "Yet if I might make some reserve,
> And duty did not call,
> I love my Lord with zeal so great
> That I would give thee all!"

As it was foretold that upon the bells of the horses should be inscribed, "Holiness unto the Lord," so, as a matter of fact, should the sincere Christian devote to his Redeemer all the common possessions, all the daily opportunities, with which Providence enriches him.

III. THIS PRINCIPLE LENDS A NEW BEAUTY AND DIGNITY TO ALL THAT THE CHRISTIAN OWNS AND DOES. Every Christian's life is dedicated, and all his property and all his talents and influence are devoted. He is not his own. Thus the light of heaven is shed upon the darkness of earth, and common things are not without a glory, because they are sanctified and ennobled as used for the service and the praise of God.—T.

Vers. 4—9.—*Church-worship vital to the soul.* As the heart is vital to the body, and sends its tide of life to every organ in the system, so the sanctuary is the central source of spiritual life to the human commonwealth. What the Church is, the home will be, the town will be, the nation will be. The guilt contracted by Israel in the temple was a fount of iniquity whence defilement spread to every part of the body politic. The sin of the sanctuary was the sin of sins. On the other hand, the sanctuary may be a well-spring of salvation. The loftiest expectations cherished here God will satisfy. "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell." Here, "he that asks, receives." "I looked, and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house."

I. CHURCH-WORSHIP IS SUPREMELY IMPORTANT. "Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house." Of such moment to human interests are these laws and ordinances, that the prophet must give concentrated attention to the matter. Every faculty of soul must be engaged to learn the will of God, and to do it. There are subtle bonds of vital connection between the human soul and temple-worship, which easily escape the notice of the eye. To gain the good which God intends we must prepare the heart and mind beforehand. "Mark well the entering in of the

house." High expectation of blessing should be raised. A state of mind free from selfish care should be fostered. As the photographer carefully prepares his plate to receive a faithful impression, so equally concerned should we be to prepare our hearts for high and intimate converse with God. Nor should we be unmindful how we depart from that august Presence. What care is needed to bury deep in our memory the truths we have received! What care ought there be to retain the anointing of holy influence upon the soul!

II. CHURCH-WORSHIP EMBRACES ELEMENTS VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE. To be acceptable worshippers God required that they should be circumcised in flesh and circumcised in heart. The one was designed to be the visible symbol of the other. To circumcise the flesh would be useless if there was not also the circumcision of the heart. The circumcision of the flesh was instructive and disciplinary—was a test of obedience. To neglect this was a wilful and open breach of the covenant made with Israel. In our present earthly state, outward religious forms are highly useful; but if they remain only forms—done without heart or willinghood—they are barren of blessing to men. As the race advances in religious culture, simpler and fewer forms will suffice. Men will be able to rise to communion with God without the intervention of rites. In the heavenly home no temple is found, for God himself is the Temple, and the redeemed have immediate access to his presence. But for the present, visible ordinances are the best channels by which we can gain fellowship with God.

III. CHURCH-WORSHIP REQUIRES PURITY OF CHARACTER. Had the God of Israel demanded internal purity as the condition of approaching him, he would have shut out the whole race of men from his house. But his high design is to create holy character among men, and every arrangement of temple-worship has purification for its end. The uncircumcised Gentiles were allowed to enter an outer court; the circumcised could have nearer approach; an inner circle was reserved for the children of Levi; and only one of all the human race was permitted to enter the holiest sanctuary—the very presence-chamber of Jehovah. In this way the world was taught the value of moral purity. In proportion to holiness of character is the nearness of access to God. The pure in heart shall see him. Hence the cardinal distinction between the circumcised and the uncircumcised, which God so wisely imposed. With *that* man God dwells who has a humble and contrite heart. To promote moral purity is the proper design of Church-worship.

IV. CHURCH-WORSHIP DEBASED IS THE FOULEST OFFENCE. It is to repel God in the act of his most gracious approach to men. It is to wound God in the tenderest part of his nature. Sacrilege has always been counted a most heinous offence. To secularize the temple is to destroy the only ladder by which we can climb to heaven. To trifle with religion is to commit spiritual suicide. On this head our Lord asks, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" As new-fallen snow is among the most beautiful of natural objects, so tarnished snow is most offensive to the eye. If the only fount of living water be poisoned, how can the life of men be sustained? To abuse the ordinances of the sanctuary is to starve one's own soul, is to make religion obnoxious to our fellows, is to insult Jehovah. This is man's crowning sin—"a sin unto death."

V. RELIGIOUS SERVICE MUST BE PERSONAL AND INDIVIDUAL. "Ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for yourselves." In the eyes of God it was a foul offence that the priests had delegated their work to others—to persons whom Jehovah had not appointed, did not approve! It is impossible for any man to devolve his service for God upon another person. God's service cannot be discharged by proxy. Just as no man can transfer to another his talents, or his qualities, or his position, so no man can transfer his responsibilities or his work. Already God has supreme claim to the entire service of *that* man to whom I may wish to transfer my task. Already he is under tribute to serve the same Master. Moreover, by abandoning my service, I abandon my reward and my joy. Delegation of service in God's kingdom is forbidden. "Each one of us must give account of himself before God." Rightly understood, service is privilege. To serve is to reign.—D.

Vers. 10—16.—*Reward and punishment on earth.* According to rank and position

in the Church is responsibility. Example is contagious. Treachery by a military officer is a graver sin than treachery by a soldier in the ranks. Pollution at the fount is a greater evil than pollution in a branch-stream. Disease in the heart is a more serious matter than disease in the skin or at the extremities. If the priests of God sanction idolatry, the whole nation will follow suit, and the cause of God is betrayed. The sin of Judas lay in *this*—that he had been a trusted friend and companion of Jesus. God's ministers hold responsible posts.

I. MEN ARE OFTEN SUBJECTED TO A CRUCIAL TEST. The present race is mainly tempted to infidelity, but the earlier generations of men were tempted to idolatry. As infidelity is now the ally of vice, so was and is idolatry. Both chime in with the lower passions of human nature. In the period preceding Ezekiel's birth Israel had gone astray after idols. On every side false deities were being set up. Idolatry was in the atmosphere. A great opportunity opened to the Levites. As ministers of Jehovah, set apart for the service of religion, they should have stood in the gap and raised barriers against the inflowing tide of idolatry. The honour of God was in their keeping. The well-being of the nation rested with them. They were the trustees of God's truth for the world. It was a testing-time. Men's favour or God's—which would they choose? Popularity for the moment or enduring fidelity—which? Alas! they made a suicidal choice! They chose the path of selfish ease. Like a physician summoned to a critical case, they too might have abated the raging fever and saved the patient's life. But they had no religious earnestness. They were mere functionaries of a system; and so long as duty was light and a livelihood secure, religion might take care of itself. Honoured with a tremendous trust, they proved themselves unworthy—faithless. Regard for God was lacking. Moral prowess was lacking. They drifted with the stream. Their sin was the sowing of evil tares, which developed into a harvest of misery and disaster.

II. IN SUCH CASES TWO LINES OF CONDUCT ARE POSSIBLE. In the stress of temptation men can either resist or yield. In no case is it a necessity to succumb. Moral principle in man *has* withstood the incoming deluge of temptation, and it always can. Unseen resources are on the side of him who steadfastly adheres to right. God is at his side. So far as public action went, Elijah stood alone in the days of Jezebel's idolatry. In Babylon Daniel stood erect as the sole witness for Jehovah, and notable triumph was his. Martin Luther was for years the only champion of Bible truth on the continent of Europe—one man against the world; yet he prevailed. So, in the instance narrated here, one family remained faithful. The sons of Zadok were worthy sons of a worthy sire. A good name is a good heritage, and no better name can a man wear than Zadok, *i.e.* "Righteousness." If a man trusts to his good name, he is a fool; but if he lives up to a good name—makes that his model—he is wiser than Solomon. A rotten ship will not survive the storm, though she is named *Impregnable*. These sons of Zadok were like Abdiel, "faithful among the faithless found." "They kept the charge of the sanctuary" when Israel went astray. They had moral backbone—some iron principle in their blood. It is the basest cowardice merely to go with the majority. Numbers are not the arbiter of truth or of right. Men who deserve the name inquire for themselves, judge for themselves, seek guidance from the Unerring Source, and act according to the result. There was no external necessity to follow the crowd of idolaters. The sons of Zadok resisted. So in every case a man's conduct is the outcome of his own choice.

III. AS THERE ARE TWO LINES OF CONDUCT, THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF AWARD. It is only the blindness of men that supposes that God's justice ever slumbers or ever mistakes. God can patiently wait his time, and can generously forbear. Yet with perfect calmness he metes out justice to every man. Touching these Levites he declares, "they shall even bear their iniquity." If any sensitiveness of soul was left in them, they must have been sorely pained, during the seventy years of captivity, with the self-conviction that their unfaithfulness had been a main cause of Israel's disaster. Nor was this all. A perpetual stigma was upon their name. An everlasting degradation was imposed on them and on their posterity. Their children and their children's children through many generations were involved in the disgrace and in the deprivation of office. So far as it had been an honour to be a Levite, now it shall be reversed—it shall be a dishonour. "They shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest

unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place." They had put God far away from them; it was simple retribution that God should forbid them to come near to him. Sin always bears its own natural fruit. Still, judgment was tempered with mercy. They shall not be entirely superseded. They shall not be banished from the new temple. Inferior office they may yet fill; subordinate service they may yet perform. And in their degraded rank they shall learn that God's service is real honour; that nearness to God is man's heaven. "They shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house; they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people." But, on the other hand, special honour is conferred on the loyal sons of Zadok. "They shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me . . . They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table," etc. Here is unmistakable promotion. "They had kept the charge of the sanctuary;" now "they shall keep *my* charge." In other words, "They shall be my treasures: I will entrust my honour and all my precious things unto them." Their fidelity is established; yea, is strengthened and enlarged by this strain of temptation. Their characters have come forth from the furnace like burnished gold. They shall be trusted in the heavenly kingdom because they are trustworthy. The omniscient eye of God does not overlook the least meritorious deed. High reward is in course of preparation for the righteous. Men often deceive themselves with specious hopes of escape. They often deceive others with plausible semblances. They can never deceive God!—D.

Vers. 27—30.—*Substantial wealth.* In every part of the world there is hunger, more or less, to possess land. By long observation men have discovered that to possess land is to possess influence and honour among their fellow-men. Is not land essential as the foundation of the harvest-crops? And are not crops of corn and fruit essential to the life of men? Is not agriculture the mainstay of a nation's well-being? Yet without land agriculture is impossible; is it not therefore reasonable that men should eagerly long to call the land their own? On the other hand, this anxiety chains down men's thoughts to inferior occupations and to a provision for their inferior nature. Such anxiety tends to draw away their attention from God and to weaken their sense of pious trust. In order to counteract this disastrous tendency, God appointed a class of men whose business it should be to keep God prominently before the eyes of their fellow-men. These servants of God were precluded from acquiring wealth. They were to be wholly employed in fostering the religious life in men. For their maintenance God provided in a special manner. These priests were designed to be models of human life, patterns of later Christians. God's method for teaching the race is this—viz. to set down a good man in their midst, and to inspire others with the desire to imitate him. If one man can live and prosper by virtue of implicit and practical faith in God, other men can. By diligent culture of the land, God has ordained that human life shall be sustained. Yet God is not shut up to this one system. "Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

I. EARTHLY POSSESSION IS ONLY A MEANS TO AN END. It is not a blessing, but only a medium of blessing. It is part of God's system of means. The land exists with a view to harvest. The harvest is produced with a view to man's bodily life. Man's bodily life is sustained with a view to his spiritual character. On the whole, it is best that the land should be appropriated to personal possession. This secures that the land shall be cultivated in the highest degree, and that the crops shall be protected from premature use. If all land should remain as common property, there would be lack of inducement to cultivate it; there would be lack of inducement to personal exertion; there would be no check to extravagant waste. Personal possession is best for a community; yet it becomes a waste and an injury if a man possesses more than he can cultivate. God gives not land to a man in order that he may be tyrannical, selfish, puffed up with overweening conceit. This is a miserable perversion of a Divine gift. Land is created for cultivation. Cultivation of land is designed for the support of human life. And all the land in the world is worth nothing to me except as it ministers to the health and vigour of my life.

II. GOD CAN SECURE THIS END BY OTHER SYSTEMS OF MEANS. The best proof that

he can do so is the fact that he has done so on many occasions. It would be the height of folly to suppose that God has not made the wisest possible arrangement for the well-being of men. Yet if men abuse the arrangement and push God away from his rightful place, God can alter his system, and bring about his end by other agencies. He sustained the life of Abraham, gave him wealth and influence among men, while, at the same time, he refused to give him a rood of land. He was the Special Protector of the Hebrew nation; yet he led them about the desert for the lifetime of a whole generation, where harvests could not be gathered, and where land was not desired as a possession. Yet they wanted not for food or for clothing. God was to them better than all harvests. So Jesus Christ called away the twelve from their secular pursuits; yet he did not suffer them to want any good thing. Jesus himself preferred to have no encumbrance of land or wealth. He freely chose the state of poverty. To him, living in such intimate union with his Father, landed possession would have been a needless burden; yet, not only were his own wants supplied, but he royally spread a table for others. What the Son did on earth was the visible effect of his Father's working.

III. UNSELFISH SERVICE BRINGS TO A MAN THE LARGEST GAIN. He who forgets himself in his generous kindness is not forgotten by his fellows—is not forgotten by God. The family of Zadok were prohibited from being landholders. Nevertheless, they shall not want. "Every dedicated thing in Israel shall be theirs." "The first of all the firstfruits" shall be theirs. God out-distances all his creatures in generously rewarding faithful service. In his book every item of devoted toil and sacrifice is noted; for it ample reward is preparing. Just as one grain of corn will produce, in the harvest, a hundred grains, so consecrated service is living seed—it shall fructify into splendid results. Did Abraham ever regret his unswerving fidelity to God? Does St. Paul feel to-day that he made too great sacrifices of himself for others? Has any one been a loser for serving God? It almost savours of profanity to propose such a question. The true servants of God shall enjoy the tribute due to God himself. Statesmen, under a mighty king, are rewarded with a goodly share of the revenue of the empire; so the tribute paid into God's temple God distributes among his priests. For them who serve God well other men labour. Other men till the ground and prepare the produce. They who do the highest work shall have the best reward. Thus it was predicted, "Strangers shall stand and feed your flock, and the sons of the alien shall be your ploughmen and your vine-dressers; but ye shall be called the Priests of the Lord." Like many other good things, the name and the office of the priest have been made a curse. Yet a true priest—God's servant to mankind—is a very fount of blessing. He is like salt in the earth—a preserving and purifying power. Wherever he comes he is a spring-season of life and joy. He is to be well cared for, so "that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house."

IV. THE DEVOTED SERVANT OF GOD OBTAINS A PROPRIETORSHIP IN GOD. "I am their Inheritance . . . I am their Possession." An estate is not really ours because we call it ours. We cannot call anything ours unless it becomes a part and parcel of ourselves. If it adds to our character and our strength, then, and only then, is it ours. The land estate is often the master of the man. He lives to improve it rather than to be improved by it. We possess property when we really get some advantage out of it. So is it also with respect to God. If we make God our Friend, we extract advantage from him. If we believe his promises and open our souls to his vitalizing grace, we are enriched from him. God's wisdom becomes our wisdom. His righteousness becomes our righteousness. His love becomes a fountain of love in us. We are "partakers of the Divine nature." In a very emphatic sense God gives himself to us. Every capacity in us may be filled with God. If we are fully God's property, God is our Portion—our Inheritance. This is transcendant condescension, the sublimity of love.

V. TO POSSESS GOD IS TO POSSESS ALL THINGS. On this account it would have been a superfluity if Jesus had been a Proprietor of wealth. Of what advantage would it have been for him to possess fields, if he could create a sufficient supply of bread by the magic of command? Although the poorest, he was yet the richest of men. It is understood that he who possesses the key of the bank possesses the contents of the bank. If the Creator be mine, if I can call him "*my* Father," then whatever his creation contains of good is mine also. It is clear that I must, as

a creature, be dependent. Is it better to depend on law or on the Lawgiver? on the cistern or on the Fount? on blind circumstances or on Omniscient Wisdom? on natural forces or on the all-creative God? My faith is founded in common sense. God undertakes to be my Friend—my Father. Then I am his child; and "if a son, then an heir—heir of God." "All things are yours, for ye are . . . God's."—D.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The shut gate: reverence.* What is the true significance of this closure? Much has been made of it by fanciful exposition; but surely the true lesson is that which lies upon the surface, viz. that the closed gate would be a continual reminder that the people must reverently abstain from using the entrance through which the Most High himself had once passed. It was another symbolic utterance of the truth that we must "put off our shoes" when we stand on "holy ground." The fact that there was a closed gate in this visionary, this ideal temple, may not unfittingly *suggest* to us (though it cannot be said to teach us)—

I. THE WAY THAT IS BARRED. If we try to enter the kingdom of God by the way or the gate of: 1. *A false independence;* if we attempt to reach the saving and redeeming truth of God by our unaided intelligence, unwilling to learn of him who came to teach us, to be to us "the Wisdom of God,"—then we shall find no entrance there (see Matt. xviii. 3; 1 Cor. iii. 18). The same may be said of: 2. *Unholy indulgence;* and of: 3. *The favourable opportunity in the future.* Whoever seeks to enter the kingdom of Christ by these doors will find no open gate, but a barred way; he must enter by the way of childlike faith, of purity, of immediate decision. The closed gate may also *suggest* to us, by contrast—

II. THE OPENNESS OF THE KINGDOM. There is a very valuable and most precious sense in which no gate is shut that was ever open into the kingdom of God. No man, let him be who or what he may, let him have been anything whatever in the past, coming to the gate of the kingdom of Christ in sincere penitence and simple faith, will find it closed against him. By whatever path he may have approached, by whatever influences constrained, if he be earnestly desirous of seeking God and serving him, he will find himself before an open door. Christ himself *is* the Door, and he is ever saying, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." But the true lesson of the passage is—

III. THE CONSTANT DUTY OF REVERENCE IN THE WORSHIP AND SERVICE OF GOD. The shut gate said (in effect), "Where God has come, you may not enter; there must be another way for the feeble and sinful creature than that taken by the almighty and holy Creator; realize the immeasurable difference between yourself and him." It is well that there should be raised, now and again, the reminder that the Lord whom we serve is the Most High and the Most Holy One; that it becomes us to worship him and to speak for him in the spirit of deepest reverence; that if a "*holy* boldness" may be cultivated, an *unholy irreverence* is to be most sedulously shunned; that our dearest Friend is our Divine Lord, worthy of the profoundest homage our hearts can pay him, claiming the fullest subjection we can bring to his feet, as we worship in his house or work in his vineyard.—C.

Vers. 9—14.—*Divine discrimination.* The prophet is necessarily expressing himself in the terms of the old dispensation; and he declares, in God's name, that no man who has not received a right spirit ("uncircumcised in heart"), and that no man who has not been admitted to the citizenship of the kingdom of God ("uncircumcised in flesh"), can "enter the sanctuary"—can come into closest contact with, and render holiest service unto, the Lord (see ver. 9). And he further declares that those of his people who had grievously sinned against him by their guilty apostasy should be excluded from the more sacred offices of the priesthood; yet that they should be admitted to the humbler posts of guarding the doors, of slaying the sacrificial animals, and of ministering to those priests who were worthier than themselves (vers. 11, 14). The general lesson we learn is that God deals with us graciously and generously, but discriminately. He gives to all his children, but he does not give the same kind, nor does he give the same measure, to all; he is merciful to the penitent, but he does not let his mercy obscure or reduce his righteousness. Those who have done serious wrong "bear their iniquity" (ver. 10), they "bear their shame" (ver. 13); and yet they have their place

and do their work in the day of restoration (see vers. 11, 14). In that kingdom of God wherein we now stand we see illustrations of this Divine discrimination in—

I. THE DISPENSING OF THE DIVINE BOUNTY. God gives much to all his creatures, to all his children; but he gives much more to some than he does to others. Herein is no favouritism or injustice. It is simply the presence of a most desirable variety; the conferring upon *every one* more than he deserves or can claim, and upon *some* a very large inheritance of good. Not any one of us is entitled to our being, or our comforts, or our powers; but God, in the fulness of his bounty, gives us these. Shall we complain because there are those to whom he has been even *more* bountifully than he has to us? Shall we not rather rejoice and be grateful that he has not limited his love as he might well have done? In fact, although very much inequality here is due to our own unwisdom, much is due to the variety in the Divine distribution. To some he gives more vigorous health, a clearer or more active mind, a stronger will, a fuller or longer life. Surely gratitude and not complaint is the note of the wise and the good.

II. THE DIVERSITY OF THE DIVINE BESTOWAL OF "GIFTS." While there is no one who may not and who should not bring his contribution to the cause of Christ and of man, it is clear that some may do a much higher and a much greater work than others can. To some it is given to guard the door only; to others to present the sacrifice unto the Lord. Some with a feeble intelligence and a scanty knowledge may be quite equal to a humble post; others with versatile and vigorous powers and a well-stored mind may render most important and vital service. And there are many degrees between the humblest and the highest office in the Christian ranks. Let every man feel that to be or to do anything for Christ is a joy and an honour; let those who are invited to the "chief seats" remind themselves that they "have nothing which they have not received," and let them do everything "as with the ability which God giveth."

III. THE EXERCISE OF DIVINE MERCY. The "Levites that went astray after their idols" were to receive the Divine mercy; they were to be restored to their place in the commonwealth of Israel; they were to be admitted to service *at* and indeed *in* the sanctuary (see vers. 11, 14); but they could not wholly regain what they had lost; some of their iniquity (or shame, ver. 13) they would have to bear; at a certain point their privileges stopped. Now, in the kingdom of Christ, we have the same kind of Divine discrimination. 1. There is mercy for those who have gone furthest astray. Into whatever alienation of heart, rejection by the mind, guiltiness of behaviour, they have wandered, there is forgiveness to be had in Jesus Christ. 2. The mercy of God means much. It means the absolute pardon of all past sin; the restoration of the soul to the favour and the friendship of God; access, full and free, to his praise, his throne, his table; liberty to serve him in the broad field of sacred usefulness. 3. But there is some serious and necessary qualification. They who have gone very far into wrong-doing, or have spent many years in sinful estrangement, *must* "bear their iniquity" in one sense—they must suffer the injury which their sin has wrought in the formation of evil habits (mental or physical) which cannot be immediately cast forth; in the loss of reputation which cannot be at once regained; in the enfeeblement of the soul (or, at any rate, the loss of strength and influence that might have been acquired) which has to be endured. Sin means some considerable measure of absolutely irreparable loss.—C.

Vers. 15, 16.—*Fidelity and its reward.* We do not suppose that the statement respecting the sons of Zadok is to be pressed to historical exactitude. Their steadfastness is assumed for the purpose of exhortation, to point out the reward of fidelity in the kingdom of God. We have—

I. THE FACT AND THE ACCOUNT OF UNFAITHFULNESS. There is no more *patent* fact before our eyes than that men do "go astray;" they go astray, like these Levites, from God, from truth, from wisdom, from purity, from their earlier convictions and their noble life. The frequency of the fact cannot dull our eyes to the extreme *sadness* of it. What sadness was there in the tone of the Master's question, "Will ye also go away?" With what profound regret do we now witness the descent of a human soul from the heights of heavenly wisdom to the depths of disbelief or

iniquity! If we are asked to account for it, we suggest three powerful temptations which prove too strong for resistance. 1. The fascinations of novelty; the love of looking at things in new lights or of treading new paths. 2. The strength of the social current; the unconscious and (often) the wholly unreasonable deference we pay to the opinions of those around us. It is difficult to row against the stream of current thought and practice; it is pleasant to go with the tide, even though we suspect it is bearing us out to the open sea of uncertainty and unbelief. 3. Concern for our temporal interests; for it often happens that a firm adherence to conviction means a painful parting, not only from friends, but from the source of "food and raiment."

II. THE SUMMONS TO FIDELITY. Many things demand of us that we should be faithful even to the end. Fidelity is: 1. *Obligatory.* We cannot leave the service of God or of truth without breaking the most sacred bonds, without laying ourselves open to self-reproach and doing that which we shall look back upon with shame and sorrow. We owe it to those who are coming up after us—especially to our own children—that we turn not our back on our old principles. 2. *Excellent.* There is something honourable and admirable in a very high degree in a consistent and faithful life; not, of course, the unintelligent repetition of the old sounds, but the adherence, through good report and evil report, through storm and sunshine, to the vital principles we learnt at the feet of Jesus Christ. The head that has grown white with the consistent advocacy and illustration of elevating and ennobling truth does wear a glorious crown. 3. *Attended with a large and a true reward.* Steadfastness, as compared with vacillation or apostasy, not only commands the esteem of men, and not only enables its possessor to enjoy his own self-respect, but it secures for him the *abiding favour of God.* God calls such men not only to the gate or door of the sanctuary; he bids them "enter into it," and "come near to his table," to "minister unto him." For them is reserved the closer fellowship and the more honourable and essential service. In the service of Christ fidelity not only aspires to the higher and better service of the Master and of mankind *below*, but it looks forward to an admission within the blessed gates, and sitting down to the "table" of the Lord in the heavenly kingdom (Luke xxii. 30).—C.

Vers. 17—31.—"*A good minister of Jesus Christ.*" What the faithful priest was under the Law, that the "good minister" is under Christ (1 Tim. iv. 6). And while the form of service is altogether different, the spirit should be the same. The ideal priest, as here delineated, is, *mutatis mutandis*, the true bishop or pastor of the New Testament. The latter is—

I. STUDIOUS OF HIS MASTER'S WILL, EVEN IN SMALL PARTICULARS. The priest was to carry out very minute instructions (see vers. 17—20). The minister of Christ is freed from the observance of such particulars, but still he is to be regardful of the will of Christ in everything. He is to carry a Christian temper and bearing everywhere. If in the view of the Master there was a right and a wrong way of entering a room and taking a seat (see Luke xiv. 7—10), so may there be a right and a wrong way of entering a pulpit, or reading a chapter, or visiting a cottage.

II. CAREFUL TO BE AT HIS BEST IN PUBLIC MINISTRATIONS. The priest was to avoid the drinking of wine at or near the time of sacrifice (ver. 21). The true minister of Christ will (1) shun everything in the way of bodily indulgence which unfits him, and (2) study and practise every habit, whether physical or mental, which will qualify him, for the discharge of his sacred duties with the utmost efficiency.

III. AN EXEMPLAR IN ALL MATTERS OF PURITY. (Vers. 22, 25, 26.) In all domestic relations, as husband and father (see 1 Tim. iii. 1—5; Titus i. 6). And in all his relations with either sex it becomes him to be a pattern of purity; not only shunning that which is positively wrong and guilty, that which is condemned in terms, but avoiding even the approaches to evil in this direction, knowing the great importance that he should encourage all, more especially the young, in that thorough purity (of heart, of word, and of deed) without which no character can be beautiful in the sight of God.

IV. ONE THAT EXPOUNDS AND ENFORCES PRACTICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS. (Ver. 23.) What the people have a right to look for from their Christian teacher is: 1. A full, clear, forcible declaration of those truths which determine their relation to God. First

of all, men want to be brought into a right relation with him; until that is done it may be said that nothing is done; estranged and separated from God, there is no rest or rightness for the human heart. Then comes: 2. A clear enunciation of Christian morals; such an exposition of duty that men shall know and feel the distinction between what is right and what is wrong in all their dealings with their fellow-men, in all their home relations, in all the varied spheres in which they move. The minister of Christ is to be, like Noah, a "preacher of righteousness;" he is so to speak that those who hear him will be powerfully encouraged in every virtue, strongly dissuaded from every evil way and all unworthiness in temper and spirit.

V. A MAN OF AN ESSENTIALLY DEVOUT LIFE. (Vers. 24, 27, 28.) One that delights in the worship of God, that does not fail to use well the privileges provided by the day and the house of the Lord, that finds his chief and best inheritance in God himself; to whom the Fatherhood of God and the friendship and service of Jesus Christ *are* (and not merely *bring*) an "exceeding great reward." He is to be a man who can say that "to him to live is Christ," and that, conversely, to know and love and serve Christ is life indeed.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLV.

From the sustenance of the priests (ch. xliv. 29—31), the new Torah naturally passes in the present chapter to the maintenance of the temple service as a whole, setting forth in the first section of the chapter (vers. 1—8) the portions of land that should be allotted respectively to the sanctuary, *i.e.* for the temple buildings, and the priests' and Levites' houses (vers. 1—5), to the city and its inhabitants, that they might be able to discharge their religious and civil obligations on the one hand to the temple, and on the other hand to the state (ver. 6), and to the prince to enable him to support himself and meet the charge of those public offerings which were required of him as the head of the community (vers. 7, 8); in the second section (vers. 9—17) dealing with the oblations the people should make to the prince for this purpose, reminding the prince, on the one hand, that these should not be levied from the people by extortion (ver. 9), and the people, on the other, that these should be delivered to the prince with honesty (vers. 10—16), and both that a certain part of the prince's revenue from the people's oblations should be devoted to the furnishing of offerings for the solemnities of the house of Israel (ver. 17); and in the third section (vers. 18—25) instituting a new feast-cycle, beginning with a Passover in the first (vers. 18—24) and ending with a Feast of Tabernacles in the seventh (ver. 25) month.

Vers. 1—8.—The portions of land that should be allotted to the sanctuary, the city, and the prince.

Ver. 1.—**Moreover, when ye shall divide by lot the land** (literally, *and in your causing the land to fall*) **for inheritance.** As the territory of Canaan had been originally divided by lot among the twelve tribes after the conquest (comp. Numb. xxvi. 55; xxxiii. 54; Josh. xiii. 6, etc.), this same method of allocating the soil amongst the new community should be followed on a second time taking possession of it after the exile. Currey believes the phrase, "divide by lot," "does not imply anything like casting lots, but is equivalent to our notion of *allotment*, the several portions being assigned by rule." There is, however, little doubt "lots" were cast to determine, if not the actual size, at least the precise situation, of each tribe's territory (see Keil and 'Pulpit Commentary' on Numb. xxvi. 54). That no such methodical distribution of Canaan ever took place, or for that matter could have taken place amongst the returned exiles, should be proof sufficient that the prophet here moves in the region of the ideal and symbolical rather than of the real and literal. **Ye shall offer an oblation**—literally, *lift up a heave offering* (comp. ch. xliv. 30; Exod. xxv. 2, 3; xxix. 28; xxx. 13, 14; Lev. vii. 14, 32; xxii. 12; Numb. xv. 19; xviii. 24)—**unto the Lord, an holy portion of the land**; literally, *a holy* (portion) *from the land*. Very significantly, in the new partition of Palestine the Lord's portion should be the first to be marked off and solemnly dedicated to Jehovah for the purposes to be forthwith specified. Those who, like Wellhausen and Smend, perceive in this allotment of land to Jehovah, and therefore to the priests, a con-

tradiction to ch. xliv. 28, omit to notice first that Jehovah required some place on which his sanctuary might be erected, and the priests some ground on which to build houses for themselves; and secondly, that, so far as the priests were concerned, the land was given by the people, not to them, but to Jehovah, and by him to them (comp. on ch. xliv. 28). The exact site of this *terumah*, or "holy portion," is afterwards indicated (ch. xlviii. 8); meanwhile its dimensions are recorded. **The length** shall be **the length of five and twenty thousand reeds, and the breadth** shall be **ten thousand.** Whether "reeds" or "cubits" should be supplied after "thousand" has divided expositors. Böttcher, Hitzig, Ewald, Hengstenberg, and Smend decide for "cubits," principally on the grounds that "cubits" are mentioned in ver. 2; that "cubits" have been the usual measure hitherto, even (as they contend) in ch. xlii. 16; and that otherwise the dimensions of this sacred territory must have been colossal, in fact, out of all proportion to the Holy Land, viz. about 720 square miles (25,000 reeds, or 42½ miles, × 10,000 reeds, or 17 miles, = 722½ square miles). Hävernick, Keil, Kliefoth, Currey, and Plumptre favour "reeds," chiefly for the reasons that in ver. 2 "cubits" are specified, and are therefore to be regarded as exceptional; that the customary measuring instrument throughout has been a reed (see ch. xl. 5; xlii. 16); and that the dimensions, which Ezekiel designed should be colossal (comp. ch. xl. 2), correspond exactly with the measurements afterwards given in ch. xlviii., if these be in reeds, but not if they be in cubits. As to the breadth of this *terumah* from east to west, Hitzig, Keil, Smend, Schröder, and Plumptre follow the LXX. (*ἑπτακισ χιλιάδας*) in substituting 20,000 for 10,000, considering that the space referred to in ver. 3 appears as if meant to be taken from an already measured larger area, which could only be that of ver. 1—the portion in ver. 1 being the whole territory assigned to the priests and Levites, and that in ver. 3 the allotment for the priests. Kliefoth, however, contends that no necessity exists for tampering with the text, and certainly if vers. 1—4 be regarded as descriptive of the priests' portion only, and מִן in the phrase, "of this measure" (וּמִכָּל־הַמִּדָּה הָאֵלֶּה), in ver. 3 be rendered "according to"—a sense it may have (see Gesenius, *sub voce*), the supposed difficulty disappears. In this case the demonstrative this in the last clause will refer to the priests' portion exclusively; in the former case, to the whole portion of the priests and Levites. That ch. xlviii. 14 declares the Levites' portion to be "holy unto the Lord" does not prove it must have been included in the holy *terumah* of ver. 1. Nor does this concession follow, as will appear, from ver. 7.

Ver. 2.—**Of this** district, either of 25,000 × 10,000, or 25,000 × 20,000 reeds, according to the view taken of ver. 1, there should be measured off for the sanctuary **five hundred** in length, **with five hundred** in breadth. The supplement here also, Keil, Kliefoth, Plumptre, and others consider to be "reeds," since obviously the whole temple with its precincts is intended (ch. xlii. 16—20), though Hengstenberg and Schröder prefer "cubits," holding the sanctuary to be the temple buildings enclosed within the outer court wall (ch. xl.). The free space **of fifty cubits round about for the suburbs** (or, *open places*) **thereof** seems to indicate that the larger area was that alluded to by the prophet. That the term מִגְרָשׁ occurs more frequently in the so-called priest-code (Lev. xxv. 34; Numb. xxxv. 2, 3, 4, 5, 7; Josh. xiv. 4; xxi. 2, 3, 8, 11, 13, etc.) and in the Chronicles (1 Chron. v. 16; vi. 35, 37; xiii. 2; 2 Chron. xi. 14; xxxi. 19) than in Ezekiel (see ch. xxvii. 28; xlviii. 15, 17) is a fact; but on this fact cannot be founded an argument for the priority of Ezekiel, since it rather points to Ezekiel's acquaintance with such "suburbs" in connection with priestly and Levitical cities.

Ver. 3.—**And of this measure shalt thou measure.** As above explained, if מִן, "of," be taken as equivalent to "from," *i.e.* deducted from, then the whole "measure" in ver. 1 must have been 25,000 × 20,000 reeds; but if, as Ewald translates, it may signify "after," "according to," then the text in ver. 1 will not require to be altered (see on ver. 1), and the present verse will be merely a reiteration of the statement in ver. 1 that the priests' portion should be 25,000 × 10,000 reeds, preparatory to the additional notification that in it should be **the sanctuary** and **the most holy** place, or rather, *the sanctuary* which is *most holy* (Revised Version). The exact position of the sanctuary in the priests' portion is afterwards stated to have been in the midst (see ch. xlviii. 8).

Ver. 4.—**The holy** portion **of the land** just defined (ver. 3) should be reserved **for the priests the ministers of the sanctuary,** *i.e.* of the inner court, who were privileged to draw near to Jehovah in altar ministrations (comp. ch. xliv. 15; Exod. xxviii. 43; xxx. 20; Numb. xvi. 5, 40), as distinguished from the Levites, who were only "ministers of the house" (ver. 5), *i.e.* guardians of the temple and assistants in its outer court services. As such this holy portion should serve the twofold purpose of providing for the priests **a place for their houses** in which

they might dwell, **and an holy place for the sanctuary**, in which they should minister.

Ver. 5.—A portion of similar dimensions should likewise be marked off for the Levites, **for themselves, for a possession of twenty chambers**; better, *for a possession unto themselves* for *twenty chambers* (Revised Version). Ewald, Hitzig, and Smend, as usual, follow the LXX. (*αὐτοῖς εἰς κατάσχεσιν πόλεις τοῦ κατοικεῖν*), and amend the text after Numb. xxxv. 2; Josh. xxi. 2, so as to read "cities (עָרִים) to dwell in;" and with them Keil agrees, only substituting "gates" (שְׁעָרִים) instead of "cities." Kliefoth and Currey retain the word "chambers" as in the text, and think the "chambers" and the "land" were two distinct possessions of the Levites, the chambers having been within (see ch. xl. 17, 18) as the land was without the sanctuary. Rosenmüller, Hävernick, Hengstenberg, and Schröder decide for "chambers," or "courts," rows of dwellings standing outside the sanctuary as the priests' chambers were located within. Hävernick supposes that along with these, which were obviously designed to be employed when the Levites were on duty, there may have been other Levitical towns and dwellings. Hengstenberg conceives them as having been "barracks for the Levites, the inhabitants of which used the twentieth part of the land assigned to them as pasturage." Unfavourable to the first view is the fact that it requires the text to be altered. Against the second is its awkward dividing of the verse and unexpected interjection of a reference to cells within the sanctuary while speaking of the land without. The third, while not free from difficulty as taking לִשְׁכָּה to be equivalent to "cell-buildings," is perhaps the best.

Ver. 6.—In addition to the holy terumah for the priests and the portion for the Levites, should be marked off **as the possession of the city** a third tract of territory, **five thousand** (reeds) **broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against**—rather, *side by side with* (Revised Version), "parallel to" (Keil)—**the oblation of the holy** portion. That is to say, it should lie upon the south, as the Levites' territory lay upon the north of the priests' portion. Adding the 10,000 reeds of breadth for the Levites' domain, the 10,000 for the priests' land, and the 5000 for the city quarter, makes a total breadth of 25,000 reeds; so that the tract in which all these were included was a square. That the portion for the city should be **for the whole house of Israel** implied that it should be communal property, belonging to no tribe in particular, but to all the tribes together—in modern phrase should be "common good," *ein Volksgut* (Kliefoth), which should neither be confiscated by kingly rapacity (comp. Jer. xxii. 13) nor invaded by individual and private appropriation, but retained for the use of the inhabitants generally (see ch. xlviii. 18, 19).

Ver. 7.—**And** a portion shall be (or, *ye shall appoint*) **for the prince.** As to situation, this portion should lie on both sides of the holy portion (or portions, *i.e.* of the priests and of the Levites; see ch. xlviii. 20—22), and of the possession, or portion, of the city; should stretch exactly in front or alongside of these, *i.e.* from north to south; and should extend on the one side westward (to the Mediterranean), and on the other side eastward (to the Jordan). The concluding clause, **And the length** shall be over against (לְעֻמַּת, a plural form, occurring only here) **one of the portions, from the west border unto the east border,** though somewhat obscure, obviously imports that the prince's portion, on both sides of the holy terumah, should extend lengthwise, *i.e.* from east to west, along the side of one of the portions assigned to the tribes; in other words, should be bounded on the north and south by the tribal territories of Judah and Benjamin (see ch. xlviii. 22).

Ver. 8.—**My princes shall no more oppress my people.** That Israel in former times had suffered from the oppressions and exactions of her kings, from Solomon downwards, as Samuel had predicted she would (1 Sam. viii. 10—18), was matter of history (see 1 Kings xii. 4, 10, 11; 2 Kings xxiii. 35), and was perhaps partly explained, though not justified, by the fact that the kings had no crown lands assigned them for their support. This excuse, however, for regal tyranny should in future cease, as a sufficient portion of land should be allocated to the prince and his successors, who accordingly should **give,** or *leave,* **the rest of the land to the house of Israel according to their tribes.** The use of "princes" does not show, as Hengstenberg asserts, that "under the ideal unity of the prince in Ezekiel, a numerical plurality is included," and that "those who understand by the prince merely the Messiah must here do violence to the text;" but simply, as Kliefoth explains, that Ezekiel was thinking of Israel's past kings, and contrasting with them the rulers Israel might have in the future, without affirming that these should be many or one (see on ch. xliv. 3).

Vers. 9—17.—The oblations of the people to the prince for the sanctuary.

Ver. 9.—In continuation of the foregoing thought, the princes of Israel first are reminded that whatever they should obtain from the people for the sanctuary was not to be extorted from them by violence and

spoil (comp. ch. vii. 11, 23; viii. 17; Jer. vi. 7; xx. 8; Hab. i. 3) or by exactions—literally, *expulsions*, or drivings of persons out of their possessions, such as had been practised on Naboth by Ahab (1 Kings xxi.)—but levied with judgment and justice, which, besides, should regulate their whole behaviour towards their subjects (comp. 2 Sam. viii. 15; Jer. xxiii. 5; xxxiii. 25).

Ver. 10.—The exhortation addressed to the princes to practise justice and judgment now extends itself so as to include their subjects, who are required, in all their commercial dealings, to have just balances and just measures—a just ephah for dry goods, and a just bath for liquids (compare the prescriptions in Lev. xix. 35, 36 and Deut. xxv. 13—15, and contrast the practices in Hos. xii. 7; Amos viii. 5; Micah vi. 10, 11; see also Prov. xvi. 11).

Ver. 11.—The ephah (a word of Egyptian origin) and the bath shall be of one measure. That is, each was to be the tenth part of an homer (see Lev. xxvii. 16; Numb. xi. 32), or cor (כֹּר, *κόρος*, 1 Kings iv. 22; Luke xvi. 7), which appears to have contained about seventy-five gallons, or thirty-two pecks. The homer (or, *chomer*) is to be distinguished from the 'omer of Exod. xvi. 36, which was the tenth part of an ephah.

Ver. 12.—The shekel shall be twenty gerahs. This ordained that the standard for money weights should remain as it had been fixed by the Law (Exod. xxx. 13; Lev. xxvii. 25; Numb. iii. 47). The "shekel" (or "weight," from שָׁקַל, "to weigh;" compare the Italian *lira*, the French *livre* out of the Latin *libra*, and the English *pound* sterling) was a piece of silver whose value, originally determined by weight, became gradually fixed at the definite sum of twenty "gerahs," beans, or grains (from גָּרַר, "to roll"). The "gerah," value twopence, was the smallest silver coin; the "shekel," therefore, was forty pence, or 3*s.* 4*d.* Commentators are divided as to how the second half of this verse should be understood: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels shall be your maneh. The "maneh" (or "portion," from מָנָה, "to be divided"), which occurs only here and in 1 Kings x. 17; Ezra ii. 69; and Neh. vii. 71, 72—"that is to say, only in books written during the Captivity or subsequent to it" (Keil)—was probably the same coin as the Greek mina (*μνᾶ*), though its weight may have somewhat differed. A comparison of 1 Kings x. 17 with 2 Chron. ix. 16 shows that a maneh was equal to a hundred shekels, which cannot be made to harmonize with the statement in this verse without supposing either that an error has crept in through transcription, or that the chronicler has employed the late Greek style of reckoning, in which one mina is equivalent to a hundred drachmas. Again, the Hebrew and Attic talents, when examined, fail to solve the problem as to how the text should be rendered. The Hebrew talent, כִּכָּר, contained 3000 sacred or Mosaic shekels according to Exod. xxxviii. 25, 26; and the Attic talent 60 minas, each of 100 drachmas, *i.e.* 6000 drachmas, or 3000 didrachmas, each of which again was equal to a Hebrew shekel. Hence the Attic mina must have been one-sixtieth part of 3000, *i.e.* 50 shekels, which once more fails to correspond with Ezekiel's notation. What this notation is depends on how the clauses should be connected. If with "and," as Ewald, following the Targumists, thinks, Ezekiel is supposed to have ordained that in the future the maneh should be, not 50, but 60 (20 + 25 + 15) shekels—the weight of the Babylonian *mana* ('Records of the Past,' iv. 97, second series); only, if he so intended, one sees not why he should have adopted this roundabout method of expression instead of simply stating that henceforth the maneh should be sixty shekels. If with "or," as Michaelis, Gesenius, Hitzig, and Hengstenberg prefer, then the prophet is regarded as asserting that in the future three manehs of varying values should be current—one of gold, another of silver, and a third of copper (Hitzig), or all of the same metal, but of different magnitudes (Michaelis); and this arrangement might well have been appointed for the future, although no historical trace can be found of any such manehs of twenty, twenty-five, and fifteen shekels respectively having been in circulation either among the Hebrews or among foreign peoples. Kliefoth pronounces both solutions unsatisfactory, but has nothing better to offer. Keil supposes a corruption of the text of old standing, for the correction of which we are as yet without materials. Bertheau and Hävernick follow the LXX. (Cod. Alex.), Οἱ *πέντε σίκλοι πέντε, καὶ δέκα σίκλοι δέκα, καὶ πεντήκοντα σίκλοι ἡ μνᾶ ἐσται ὑμῖν*, "*The five shekel* (piece) shall be *five* shekels, *and the ten shekel* (piece) shall be *ten* shekels, *and fifty shekels shall your maneh be;*" but Hitzig's judgment on this proposal, with which Kliefoth and Keil agree, will most likely be deemed correct, that "it carries on the face of it the probability of its resting upon nothing more than an attempt to bring the text into harmony with the ordinary value of the mina."

Vers. 13—15.—The offerings the people should present are next specified. (1) Of

wheat, **the sixth part of an ephah of** (*out, of*, or *from*) **an homer**; *i.e.* the sixtieth part of an homer, equal to about one-tenth of a bushel (ver. 13). (2) Of barley, **the same** (ver. 13). (3) Of oil, **a tenth part of a bath out of the cor**, or homer of ten baths, *i.e.* the hundredth part of every homer, equal to a little more than half a gallon (ver. 14). (4) Of the flock, **one lamb** or kid (שֶׂה, meaning either) **out of the flock, out of two hundred, out of the fat**—or well-watered (see Gen. xiii. 10)—**pastures of Israel**, *i.e.* one of every two hundred, and never the worst, but always the best. These oblations should be made for the maintenance of the necessary sacrificial worship in the new temple, for the meal, burnt, and peace or thank offerings that should there be presented to make reconciliation or atonement for the house of Israel. Compared with the offerings prescribed by the Law of Moses, these discover important variations. (1) Of flour, the Law demanded one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour with a lamb (Exod. xxix. 40), with a ram two-tenths (Numb. xv. 6), with a bullock three-tenths (Numb. xv. 9); of wheat and of barley Ezekiel's *Torah* requires one-sixteenth of an ephah for each, *i.e.* one-third in all. (2) Of oil, the Mosaic ordinance was, with a lamb should be presented one-fourth of a hin, *i.e.* one-twenty-fourth of a bath; with a ram, one-third of a hin, *i.e.* one-eighteenth of a bath; with a bullock one-half of a hin, *i.e.* one-twelfth of a bath. Ezekiel's ordinance was in every case one-tenth of a bath. (3) Of animals, the Pentateuchal legislation left the necessary victims, whether rams, goats, or bullocks, to be provided by the offerers at their own free-will, stipulating as compulsory only the firstborn of the flocks and herds (Exod. xiii. 2, 12; xxii. 29, 30; Lev. xxvii. 26; Numb. iii. 13; viii. 17; Deut. xv. 19), the first ripe fruits of the earth (Exod. xxii. 29; Numb. xviii. 12), and the tithes, or tenths, of seed, fruit, the herd and flock (Lev. xxvii. 30—33); the Ezekelian omits the latter, but ordains in lieu of the former that one animal out of every two hundred in every flock shall be obligatory on Jehovah's worshippers. Thus the demands of Ezekiel's Torah surpass those of the earlier or Mosaic Torah in quantity as well as quality. That these demands are definitely specified does not prove they should partake rather of the nature of a tax than of a free-will offering. That they were not to be regarded as taxes is shown by the absence of any allusion to penalties for neglect of payment; that they were designed to be looked upon as free-will offerings is plain from the circumstance that Jehovah never supposes for a moment that these generous offerings will be withheld; and perhaps all that is really signified by them is that the liberality of Jehovah's people in the future age should greatly exceed that which had been practised at any former time.

Ver. 16.—**All the people of the land shall give** (literally, *shall be for*) **this oblation** (or, *terumah*) **for the prince in Israel.** Assuming that the prince here refers to the ordinary civil magistrate, Hengstenberg founds on this an argument in support of state Churches: "This is also the general doctrine, that the magistrate shall take first of all from the taxes levied the means for the proper observance of Divine worship." But if the oblations above referred to were not properly taxes, and if the prince was not properly an earthly sovereign of the ordinary type, this argument falls to the ground.

Ver. 17.—The prince, as receiver-general of the people's offerings, should devote them to maintaining (literally, *it should be upon him*, and so form part of his duty to maintain) the sacrificial worship of the new temple, **in the feasts** (חַגִּים, or joyous celebrations), **and in the new moons, and in the sabbaths**, and generally **in all solemnities** (מוֹעֲדִים, or appointed times, hence festal seasons) **of the house of Israel** (comp. 1 Kings viii. 62; Ezra vii. 17), that thereby he might **make reconciliation** (or, *atonement*) for the house of Israel. This combination of the kingly and priestly offices in the person of the prince (David) obviously typified the similar union of the same offices in David's Son (Christ).

Vers. 18—25.—These verses allude to the institution of a new feast-cycle, whose deviations from that of the Pentateuch will be best exhibited in the course of exposition. Whether three festivals are referred to or only two is debated by expositors. Fairbairn, Hävernick, Ewald, Keil, Schröder, and Plumptre decide for three—the festival of the new year (vers. 18—20), the Passover (vers. 21—24), and the Feast of Tabernacles (ver. 25). Kliefoth, Smend, and Currey find only two — a Passover and a Feast of Tabernacles. Hengstenberg sees in the solemnities of the first and seventh days of the new year a special consecration service for the new temple, not to be repeated, corresponding to the dedication of the tabernacle on the first day of the first month (Exod. xl. 1, 17), or of the Solomonic temple in the seventh month (1 Kings viii. 2; 2 Chron. vii. 8),

and in imitation of which the post-exilic temple was dedicated, probably on the first day of the year (Ezra vi. 16—22). Against the notion of a special dedication service, however, stand the facts (1) that the temple had been already consecrated by the entrance into it of the glory of the Lord (ch. xliii. 4); and (2) that the service here described differs in respect either of time or ritual or both from every one of the three cited dedications. Between the two other views the difference is slight. If the festival of the new year (vers. 18—20) was distinct from the Passover, it was still, by the ritual of the seventh and fourteenth days of the first month (vers. 20, 22), so closely connected with the Passover as practically to form a preparation for and introduction to it. Then the circumstance that the proper ceremonial for the new moon is afterwards described (ch. xlvi. 6) favours the proposal to regard the rites in vers. 18—20 as a part of the Passover festival; while this view, if adopted, will explain the omission from ver. 25 of all mention of the Feast of Trumpets on the first day of the seventh month (Lev. xxiii. 24; Numb. xxix. 1), and of the great Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev. xxiii. 27; Numb. xxix. 7), with which the autumn festival was usually preceded, by showing that in lieu of these a sacrificial observance had been prefixed to the Passover on the first and seventh days of the first month. Smend's theory, that "Ezekiel's feast-calendar divides the ecclesiastical year into two halves, each of which begins with a reconciliation ceremony (or expiatory sacrifice) on the first days of the first and seventh months respectively," would lend confirmation to the above view, were it not that the theory in question is based on an alteration of the text in ver. 20 (see Exposition).

Ver. 18.—**Thus saith the Lord God.** The usual solemn introduction prefixed to Divine enactments (comp. ver. 9; ch. xliii. 19; xliv. 6, 9; xlvi. 1, 16). **In the first month, in the first day of the month** (comp. Gen. viii. 13). That the first month, Abib, was intended is apparent from ver. 21, compared with Exod. xii. 2; Numb. ix. 1. Under the Mosaic Torah, the Passover began on the tenth day of the first month by the selection of a lamb (Exod. xii. 3—6), corresponding to which the great Day of Atonement in the seventh month fell upon the tenth day (Lev. xxiii. 27). In the Torah of Ezekiel, the ceremonies introducing and leading up to the Passover should begin with the first day of the month, as under the Law the Feast of Trumpets on the first day of the seventh month practically began the solemnities which culminated in the Feast of Tabernacles. **A young bullock without blemish** should form the sacrificial offering on this first day of the year, according to the ordinance published by Ezekiel; that promulgated by the Hebrew lawgiver appointed for new moons generally, in addition to the burnt and meat offerings, a he-goat for a sin offering (Numb. xxviii. 15), and particularly for the first day of the seventh month, in addition to the regular burnt and meat offerings, one young bullock, one ram, and seven lambs for a burnt offering, meat offerings of flour and oil for each of these animals, and a he-goat for a sin offering (Numb. xxix. 2—6). The object for which the Mosaic offerings were presented was to make atonement for the worshippers; the Ezekelian sacrifices should stand in more immediate relation to the place of worship, and be designed to **cleanse the sanctuary** from such defilement, to be afterwards mentioned, as might be contracted from the presence in it of erring men (ver. 20).

Ver. 19.—The mode in which this act of purgation should be performed is next described. The blood of the sin offering should by the priest be **put** (not sprinkled) **upon the posts of the house,** *i.e.* upon the posts or pillars of the door connecting the holy place with the holy of holies (ch. xli. 21), **and upon the four corners of the settle of the altar** of burnt offering in the inner court (ch. xliii. 14), **and upon the posts of the gate of the inner court,** not of the eastern gate only, as Hitzig suggests, but of all the three gates (ch. xl. 29, 33, 36). Compare ch. xliii. 20, and the procedure in sin offerings under the Law, which directed that in certain cases part of the blood should be put by the priest's finger upon the horns of the altar, and the rest poured out beside the bottom of the altar (Exod. xxix. 12; Lev. iv. 7), while in other cases it should be sprinkled before the veil of the sanctuary (Lev. iv. 6, 17), and on the great Day of Atonement seven times even on and before the mercy-seat, and on the altar of incense (Lev. xvi. 14, 18, 19).

Ver. 20.—The same ceremony should be repeated on **the seventh day of the month,** not on *the first day of the seventh month,* as Smend proposes, in accordance with the LXX., Ἐν τῷ μηνὶ τῷ ἑβδόμῳ· μιᾷ τοῦ μηνὸς

אַחַת, and on the ground that "the seventh day of (the same) month" would have been in Hebrew בַּשְּׁבִיעָה לְחֹדֶשׁ, as in ch. i. 1; xxx. 20; at the same time admitting that בְּחֹדֶשׁ is sometimes used (Numb. x. 11), though not (except in this verse) by Ezekiel. The sin offerings in question should be made for (or, *on account of*, מִן, "away from," expressing the reason why anything is done) **every one that erreth, and for him that is simple**, *i.e.* for such transgressors as should have gone aside from the straight path through ignorance or foolishness, the "simple" man being here, as in Prov. vii. 7; xxii. 3; xxvii. 12, one easily enticed or persuaded to do evil. For such offenders the Law of Moses provided means of expiation (Lev. ii. 2, etc.; v. 15; Numb. xv. 27); for the presumptuous sinner, who despised the word of the Lord and violated his commandment, only one doom remained, to be cut off from among his people (Numb. xv. 30; Deut. xvii. 12).

Ver. 21.—**With the fourteenth day of the month**, the day appointed by the Law of Moses for the killing of the Paschal lamb (Exod. xii. 6), **the Passover** (הַפֶּסַח with the article, the well-known festival of that name) should commence. Though the selection of the lamb upon the tenth day of the first month is not specified, it may be assumed that this would be implied in the appointment of a Passover which should begin on the day already legalized by the Mosaic Torah. According to Wellhausen and Smend, the first mention of the Passover occurs in Deut. xvi. 2, 5, 6, and the next in 2 Kings xxiii. 22; but this can only be maintained by declaring Exod. xxxiv. 25, which occurs in the so-called 'Book of the Covenant'—a pre-Deuteronomic work—"a gloss," and by relegating Exod. xii. to the "priest-code" for no other reason than that it alludes to the Passover (vers. 11, 21, 27, 43)—a principle of easy application, and capable of being used to prove anything. Smend likewise regards it as strange that the Passover should be made to commence on the fourteenth of the month, and not, as the autumn feast, on the fifteenth (ver. 25); and suggests that the original reading, which he supposes was the fifteenth, may have been corrected subsequently in accordance with the priest-code. But if the priest-code was posterior to and modelled after Ezekiel, why should it have ordained the fourteenth instead of that which its master recommended, viz. the fifteenth? A sufficient explanation of the differing dates in Ezekiel is supplied if Ezekiel, in fixing them, may be held to have followed the so-called priest-code. **A feast of seven days**; literally, *a feast of hebdomads of days* (חַג שָׁבֻעוֹת יָמִים). By almost all interpreters this is understood to mean "a feast of a full week," the exact duration of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which began with the eating of the Paschal lamb (Exod. xii. 8, 15—20; Lev. xxiii. 6; Numb. ix. 11; Deut. xvi. 3, 4). At the same time, it is frankly admitted that, to extract this sense from the words, שָׁבֻעוֹת must be changed into שָׁבֻעַ. As the words stand, they can only signify a feast of weeks of days. חַג שָׁבֻעוֹת, in Exod. xxxiv. 22 and Deut. xvi. 10, is applied to the Feast of Pentecost, which was called "a Feast of Hebdomads," from the seven weeks which intervened between the Passover and it. Hence Kliefoth, adhering to the legitimate sense of the expression, understands the prophet to say that the whole period of seven weeks between the first Passover and Pentecost should be celebrated in the new dispensation as a Feast of Unleavened Bread. In support of this Kliefoth cites a similar use of the word "days" in Gen. xxix. 14; xli. 1; Deut. xxi. 13; 2 Kings xv. 13; Jer. xxviii. 3, 11; Dan. x. 2, 3; and certainly no objection can be taken to a Passover of seven weeks, if Ezekiel may be supposed to have been merely expressing analogically spiritual conceptions, and not furnishing actual legislation to be afterwards put in operation. Against this translation, however, Keil urges that the expression, "seven days of the feast" (ver. 23), appears to mark the duration of the festival; but this is not so convincing as its author imagines, since the prophet may be held as describing, in vers. 23, 24, the procedure of each seven days without intending to unsay what he had already stated, that the feast should continue seven weeks of days. A second objection pressed by Keil, that יָמִים "is not usually connected with the preceding noun in the construct state, but is attached as an adverbial accusative," as in the above-cited passages, is sufficiently disposed of by Kliefoth's statement that the punctuation might easily be altered so as to read שָׁבֻעוֹת. Upon the whole, while not free from difficulty, the view of Kliefoth seems best supported by argument.

Ver. 22.—The first day of the feast proper, *i.e.* the fourteenth, should be distinguished by the prince's presenting, **for himself and for all the people of the land, a bullock for a sin offering.** That this was a deviation from the earlier Mosaic legislation in three particulars is apparent. In the first place, the "sin offering" here prescribed was manifestly to take precedence of the Paschal feast proper, whereas in the Paschal festival of the so-called priest-code the daily sacrifices were appointed to begin

on the fifteenth after the Paschal lamb had been slain and eaten (Lev. xxiii. 8). In the second place, the sin offering was to consist of a bullock instead of a he-goat as formerly (Numb. xxviii. 22). In the third place, it was not intended to be renewed on each of the seven following days of the feast, but was designed, by repeating the sacrifice of the first and seventh days, to connect these with the fourteenth, on which the feast proper opened.

Vers. 23, 24.—The deviations of Ezekiel's Torah from that of Moses in regard to the offerings to be made during the seven days of the feast are also unmistakable (see Numb. xxviii. 19—22). (1) While the Pentateuchal code demanded, *as a daily burnt offering*, two bullocks, one ram, and seven yearling lambs, this of Ezekiel prescribes **seven bullocks and seven rams.** (2) While that enjoined, *as a meat offering*, three-tenths of an ephah of flour mixed with oil for each bullock, two-tenths for a ram, and one-tenth for each lamb, this **asks an ephah** of flour with **a hin of oil** for each bullock and each ram. (3) The sin offering in the new Torah should be the same as in the old, **a he-goat daily.**

Ver. 25.—**In the seventh month,** *i.e.* in month of Tishri (1 Kings viii. 2), **in the fifteenth day of the month, shall he,** *i.e.* the prince, as in ver. 22, **do the like in the feast of the seven days**; or, *in the feast shall he do the like the seven days* (Revised Version). That is, the same sacrifices should be offered daily throughout the seven days of this feast as had been offered during the seven days of the former feast. That this feast was designed to represent the ancient Feast of Tabernacles can scarcely be doubted, though the practice of living in booths (Lev. xxiii. 40—43) is not adverted to. Possibly this may have been omitted, as Keil remarks, "because the practice of living in booths would be dropped in the time to come" (see, however, Neh. viii. 14—17), or, as Kliefoth observes, "because, when Ezekiel's Torah should come into operation, the people of God would be dwelling in the eternal tabernacles of which the booths of the Mosaic Torah were but the types." Nor are the deviations of Ezekiel's Torah from that of Moses, in respect of the daily offerings prescribed for this feast, fewer or of less importance than those which have been noted in connection with the Passover. Ezekiel's Torah prescribes for a burnt offering seven bullocks and seven rams daily, for a sin offering a he-goat daily, for a meat offering an ephah of flour with a hin of oil for each bullock and each ram daily; the Mosaic Torah, while retaining the he-goat for a sin offering, required—for a burnt offering on the first day thirteen young bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs, and so on, diminishing by one bullock each day, till the seventh, when seven bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs should be sacrificed; and for a meal offering three-tenths of an ephah of flour for every bullock, and two-tenths of an ephah for every ram, and one-tenth of an ephah for each lamb, according to the number of bullocks, rams, and lambs for each day. In addition, the Mosaic celebration concluded with a solemn assembly with special sacrifices on the eighth day (see Lev. xxiii. 34—36; Numb. xxix. 12—39), of which no mention is made in Ezekiel. Nor should it be overlooked that Ezekiel's Torah omits all reference to the other great festival that figures in the Mosaic Torah, viz. that of Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks, as well as to the Feast of Trumpets and the great Day of Atonement (see on ver. 21), although Hengstenberg is of opinion that Ezekiel, having instanced the Passover and Tabernacles, the beginning and end of the feast-cycle already known to the Jews, designed that all the feasts which lay between should be included. Be this, however, as it may, to infer from the deviations in Ezekiel's Torah from that of Moses, as George, Vatke, Kuenen, Wellhausen, Smend, Robertson Smith, Cornill, and Driver have done, that the latter had no existence in the time of Ezekiel is, as Hävernick observes, not only to render Ezekiel's representations completely unintelligible, but to beg the entire question between the newer criticism and the old faith. "How will one generally explain," asks Cornill ('Einleitung in das Alte Testament,' p. 64), "that a Jerusalem priest sets up a Torah for the future which completely ignores the priest code (?), in all points remains far behind its requirements (?), and in a groping manner lays hold of the future, instead of appropriating to himself the finished system (*i.e.* of the so-called priest-code, supposing it to have then existed)? Why does Ezekiel require in the cultus (which he sets up) so much less than Numb. xxviii. and xxix.? Where in Ezekiel is the high priest, who for the priest-code is the centre of the theocracy? Where is the great Day of Atonement of Lev. xvi.?" and so on. The answer to these interrogations is that Ezekiel did not intend to republish the Mosaic Torah, but to modify it so as to meet the requirements of the new era, or (perhaps better) to express more adequately the new conceptions of religion and worship he had been commissioned to set before his fellow-exiles; and that Ezekiel had a perfect right to deal in this way even with the Mosaic Torah, inasmuch as he distinctly claimed, in committing to writing the details of his temple-

vision, to be acting under special Divine guidance (ch. xliii. 10, 11; xliv. 5). Canon Driver ('An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament,' p. 133) admits that the argument from Ezekiel's deviations from the so-called priest-code in favour of the later origin of the latter, if "taken by itself, would not, perhaps, be a decisive one," and even adds that, "however doubtful it may be whether Ezekiel presupposes the *completed* priests' code, it is difficult not to conclude that he presupposes *parts* of it" (ibid., p. 138). But if none of it existed before Ezekiel, then a counter-question to that of Cornill may be put, "How is it to be explained that the unknown author of the priests' code should have allowed himself to deviate so far from the arrangements which Ezekiel, a prophet acting under Jehovah's guidance, had established?" The natural reply is that when the priests' code was composed, Ezekiel's Torah did not exist. If the newer criticism believes that Ezekiel would not have deviated so largely as he has done from the rites prescribed in the priests' code had these been in operation and invested with authority (see Driver, 'An Introduction,' etc., p. 133), the newer criticism should explain how the priests' code came to deviate from the Torah of Ezekiel, which, if it was not then in actual operation, was at least invested with Divine authority. Is it not every way as logical to infer, from the deviations of the priests' code (supposing it to be post-exilic) from the Torah of Ezekiel, that the author of the priests' code could not have known of the existence of Ezekiel's Torah, and therefore that it could not then have been in existence, as *vice versâ* that Ezekiel had no acquaintance with the priests' code, and that therefore it had not in his day been composed? The impartial reasoner, with no theory to uphold, will recognize that the two arguments run exactly *pari passu*.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 7.—*The Prince's portion.* In the division of the land and its produce, while care was taken for the maintenance of the priesthood by means of the sacrifices, arrangements were also made for the support of the government by assigning a certain portion to "the prince." Christ, as "Prince of Peace," the Head of the spiritual kingdom, has a right to claim his portion in all that we possess.

I. A PORTION SHOULD BE RESERVED FOR OUR HEAVENLY PRINCE. All that we have should be devoted to Christ, and nothing used except as he may be pleased with the purpose to which it is directed. In all our daily pursuits, if we are true Christians, we should not forget that Christ owns us, and therefore owns all our property. But it is not enough to allow this truth and even endeavour to act upon it. As the idea of the sacredness of all days is sometimes pleaded in excuse for the misuse of Sunday, so the notion that all we have belongs to Christ may be used as a plea for escaping from all direct acts of sacrifice on behalf of his cause. But we have to remember that our Master claims a portion for his immediate use. Some of our time should be devoted to Christ's work, some of our money to the furtherance of his kingdom among men. What we give to a missionary society should be considered as especially a part of the Prince's portion. Does the Prince have all that is due to him in this way?

II. THE PRINCE REQUIRES AND WILL USE HIS PORTION. What we give wisely to the cause of Christ is not wasted as a merely ceremonial oblation. It is not like a sacred libation which is spilt for no practical purpose. The money and labour spent in the cause of Christ should bear fruit in advancing his cause. By the economy of Providence this great work is left to Christ's people. If they do not give their Prince his portion, the rights of the kingdom will be crippled, and its progress among men will be hindered. Great and rich as he is, Christ has graciously condescended to make the spread of his kingdom on earth depend on the gifts and labours of Christian men and women. Thus we may say the Prince needs his portion.

III. THE PRINCE HAS EARNED HIS PORTION. Democratic people grow impatient at the claims of princes, whom they consider to be idle and useless. But some princes have their missions in the world. Christ came to do a great work. He was no indolent Prince, only eager to clutch at his dues, and giving his people nothing in return. The account lies just the other way. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich (2 Cor. viii. 9). Christ has given himself for his people. He has now ascended up on high, to give gifts to men (Eph. iv. 8). When we give him anything, we are only returning some portion of what we first received

from him, only rendering to him what is his own. If we would measure Christ's claim upon us, we must be able to tell how great was his condescension in coming to this world, how tremendous was his sacrifice in his death on the cross, and how glorious are the blessings which he bestows on his people.

Ver. 10.—"*Just balances.*" The princes of Israel are exhorted to govern justly and to be fair in their exaction of taxes. The older prophets often had occasion to denounce the oppression and robbery of the people by the princes. After the chastisement of the Captivity, the restored people should be well treated by a better order of princes. But when the rulers set an example of using just balances, the people may be required to follow.

I. COMMERCIAL HONESTY IS A PRIMARY CHRISTIAN DUTY. It is possible to represent the spirituality of religion as so extremely ethereal that it has no contact with the commonplace facts of daily life. There is a subtle temptation to antinomianism in the highest pretensions of holiness. But the scriptural view of religion keeps it in close relations with plain every-day morality. The saintliness that is too refined to condescend to questions of truth and honesty is pure hypocrisy. The Christian should be first just and true; let him then add whatever other graces he may attain to. But to neglect these duties is to leave the most fundamental parts of morality unestablished. The airy pinnacles of rapturous devotion that shoot up so high in the heavens rest on an insecure foundation when these essential duties are neglected.

II. THIS DUTY IS SHAMEFULLY NEGLECTED BY PROFESSEDLY CHRISTIAN PEOPLE. In some quarters there seems to be a tacit understanding that it is impossible to be quite true and straightforward. A certain amount of laxity is said to be permitted by "the custom of the trade." This evil is glaringly apparent in regard to those goods that are exported to foreign nations. The worthless shoddy and the sized calico that wealthy English firms send abroad advertise to the world the hypocrisy of English Christianity. It is hard for the missionary to urge the heathen to embrace the gospel when the merchant offers to them these things as specimens of its products. It is vain to urge that competition is so fierce as to make an honest course ruinous to those who would pursue it. It is better to be a bankrupt than to be a thief. But experience shows that dishonest trading does not pay in the long run. Its character is certain to be discovered, and then confidence is destroyed and the trade checked. On the other hand, there are well-known houses that have grown rich and prosperous on their ascertained fairness in supplying good wares by honest measures.

III. DISHONESTY MINGLED WITH FALSEHOOD IS DOUBLY WICKED. This is the case where incorrect measures are used. The measures are intended to represent a certain standard, of which they come short. There is the pretence of giving good measure. This is worse than the offering of a short quantity without the show of testing it. The highwayman who meets a man openly and demands his purse is no hypocrite. But the business man who uses false measures is passing himself off as honest while he is acting as a thief. The shame of lying is added to the crime of stealing. There is an abuse of confidence, for the well-known measure is supposed to represent a certain quantity. The deceitfulness of this conduct utterly degrades the miserable man who fattens for a while on its ill-gotten gains, only to reap in the end certain ruin in the next world, if not in this.

Vers. 13—15.—*Systematic giving.* Very elaborate regulations were drawn up to determine the several proportionate gifts of various kinds which were to be made by the Israelites. These regulations were after the manner of the times, and in accordance with the spirit of the Jewish Law. A larger freedom appertains to the Christian era, and we are not now required to make our offerings according to any definite proportion fixed for us by authority. But we are not therefore to conclude that there is to be no system or method in our giving for Christian or charitable objects. We are left to make our own system. No one is to say what his brother should do. But each is responsible to his Master to do what he feels to be right. Thus St. Paul says, "Let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him" (1 Cor. xvi. 2).

I. SYSTEMATIC GIVING IS LESS DIFFICULT THAN IRREGULAR GIVING. People who live up to if not beyond their incomes find it impossible to spare any considerable amount

for objects outside the range of their private expenses. But if the money to be contributed for such objects were set aside from the first, it would be forthcoming, just as the rent money is forthcoming. Christ's portion is his due, and provision should certainly be made for this, whatever may remain over for other objects. That can be done by a man setting aside a portion of his income as sacred for his Master's use.

II. SYSTEMATIC GIVING IS GENEROUS GIVING. People who give without method or consideration rarely know how little they give. There are pitiable creatures, who feel as though they were being bled every time a coin is extracted from them for some good object. They remember the disagreeable operation long after, and it makes so deep an impression on them that, when it comes to be repeated, they imagine that they are always giving. If they were always giving this would be no hard thing; for are they not always receiving? But if these people deliberately considered the claims of the best objects, and then determined to assign a portion of their income to meet those claims, they could not put down the miserable sum their contributions now amount to, unless they were devoid of all Christian principle.

III. SYSTEMATIC GIVING SHOULD BE WISE GIVING. Spasmodic charity may be very generous, but it is likely to be foolish and misdirected. A more thoughtful method would lead to a more just apportioning of the funds that are contributed. It is not right that the cause of Christ should depend on irregular gushes of liberality. There may be less scope for sentiment in a methodical manner of giving, but there will be more practical utility.

IV. SYSTEMATIC GIVING WILL BECOME HURTFUL IF IT IS TREATED IN A WRONG SPIRIT. One danger is that it should degenerate into a mechanical routine, like the payment of taxes. Then all heart and soul will vanish out of it. Another danger is that it may generate ostentatiousness, since the left hand may know too well what the right hand does. A third danger is that this system of giving may harden the heart in regard to new claims. The systematic giver often fortifies himself against the most pathetic appeals by the reply that he has reached the end of his charitable fund. Such an answer is unworthy of one who has a Christian heart of sympathy. The remedy is to be found in regarding the fixed amount to be given as a *minimum*, never as a *maximum*.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 8.—*Princes not oppressors.* In the apportionment of the restored and newly occupied territory there was need for a display of a just and equitable spirit. That there was some danger of another and contrary spirit is evident from the admonition here addressed by the prophet in the name of the Lord to those in power and authority.

I. THE SPHERE OF OPPRESSION. The oppressor may exercise his might in violation of the principles of righteousness; either (1) against the personal liberty, or (2) against the property and possessions, of the oppressed.

II. THE MOTIVE TO OPPRESSION. This is almost always selfishness, the desire of personal enrichment, aggrandizement, or power, to attain which the rights of another are treated as of no account.

III. THE OPPORTUNITY OF OPPRESSION. It is no merit on the part of the obscure, the impoverished, the friendless, that they abstain from oppression, for the simple reason that it is not in their power; they may be oppressed, but they cannot be oppressors. But those in high station, especially princes, whose power is arbitrary and unchecked, have many opportunities of wronging their subjects and inferiors. In a country like our own, where public rights are secured, and where the monarch acts of necessity within constitutional limits, it is not easy to understand how in other states of society the poor and uninfluential may be at the mercy of the great.

IV. THE SIN OF OPPRESSION. This appears from considering the fact that the distinctions obtaining amongst men are to a large extent accidental and artificial. It is for the welfare of society that certain individuals should be entrusted with power; when that power is abused, the very purpose of such distinctions is violated. The law of him who is King of kings, and the principles of whose government are justice and mercy, is opposed to the exercise of political power in an unrighteous and inconsiderate manner.

V. THE REMEDY FOR OPPRESSION. This is set forth in a very striking manner in the passage before us: "*My* princes shall no more oppress *my* people." The fact that both superior and inferior, both governors and subjects, are the Lord's, is adduced as the strongest argument against oppression. If both alike are the Lord's, the unreasonableness is apparent of one class treating the other with harshness and injustice. In fact, religion is here, as elsewhere, the true guide of human conduct, the true corrective of human ills. Let men first consider their obligations to the Giver of all, their responsibility to the Ruler of all, and such considerations will preserve them from wronging those who are, with them, subjects of the same Sovereign and children of the same Father. All alike are his, and there is a community of interest amongst all who acknowledge a common allegiance and a common indebtedness. In such a case, oppression is not only unrighteous, it is unreasonable and monstrous.—T.

Ver. 15.—*Reconciliation.* The relations between Israel and Jehovah were symbolical of those existing between the race of man and the same righteous Ruler and Judge. The sacrifices and priesthoods, the services and festivals, of the Mosaic economy have all a spiritual significance, and are typical of spiritual and Christian realities. Turning from the local and temporary circumstances, and regarding only the abiding, permanent, and universal truths suggested by the term "reconciliation," we remark—

I. THERE IS REASON AND NEED FOR RECONCILIATION. This is to be found in the estrangement of the human race from God, in that rebellion which is both serious in itself and universal in extent, in the displeasure of him who is justly offended with the repudiation of his claims and the rejection of his authority.

II. RECONCILIATION IS NEEDED FOR MAN WITH GOD. God's favour is essential to man's welfare. God stands in no need of aught upon man's part. The requirements and necessity are on the human side; but the advances and the provision must be upon the Divine side. The question is—Is God willing to be reconciled with sinful, rebellious, guilty man? There is no equality between the parties to the transaction. It is God's part to bestow, and man's to receive.

III. RECONCILIATION IS EFFECTED BY A DIVINELY APPOINTED MEDIATOR. It is observable that, in the arrangement prescribed in the prophetic book, the prince and the priest both took part in the work of reconciliation. The oblation of the people was handed to the prince, and he gave it to the priests, who duly presented it. The kingly and sacerdotal offices had accordingly each a part in the work of reconciliation. This typifies the union of the two offices in the Person of the great Reconciler, the Son of God. In him were combined the functions of the high priest with the functions of the king. The more the character and the offices of Christ are studied, the more is it apparent that he combined in himself all the qualifications needed for the fulfilment of the atoning work, for making reconciliation for the sins of the people.

IV. THE MEANS BY WHICH RECONCILIATION IS EFFECTED ARE SACRIFICIAL. The sacrifices required under the old covenant were minutely prescribed; but their importance lay, not only in the moral truths which they symbolized, but in the great Sacrifice which was to be offered up for all mankind, and not for Israel alone, and by which not a ceremonial but a true and spiritual reconciliation was to be brought about. Christ offered himself for us.

V. THE RESULT IS WORTHY OF THE MEANS EMPLOYED. Whether we consider the vast numbers of those whose acceptance and well-being is secured, the completeness of the harmony effected, or the everlasting duration of the peace secured, we cannot but admit that the sacrifice offered on Calvary and pleaded in heaven was not provided in vain. The nation of the saved is brought into harmonious relations with the Lord of all. Rebellion is at an end, and an affectionate loyalty reigns for ever in place of discord and disobedience.—T.

Vers. 18—25.—*Sacred festivals.* The prophet here refers to some of those great "feasts of the Jews" which formed so interesting a feature of the social and religious life of the chosen people. These references are suggestive of the spiritual privileges and religious exercises of the vaster Israel of God, which he has redeemed to himself by the death of his Son and consecrated to himself by the grace of his Spirit. Among the lessons which these festivals may thus convey may be mentioned—

I. THE UNITY OF THE CONSECRATED PEOPLE. Never could Israel have more impressively realized and displayed their oneness in political and religious life than when they together celebrated such festivals as those of the Passover and of Tabernacles, both referred to by the prophet in this passage. A grander unity distinguishes the spiritual Israel, which is one because under the care of the one Father, because redeemed by the one Mediator, because informed, hallowed, and guided by the one Spirit. It was the prayer and the purpose of the Divine High Priest that all his people might be one—as one nation, cherishing the same memories, obeying the same laws, speaking the same language, and honouring the same King.

II. THE INDWELLING OF GOD AMONG THE CONSECRATED PEOPLE. It was not to celebrate a merely human community that the children of Israel kept their solemn feasts; it was in order to realize, in a striking and helpful manner, the perpetual interest and care of their glorious Lord and King. They were a chosen nation, a peculiar people, and this they both recognized and testified when they assembled to observe their festive solemnities, instituted by Divine wisdom to retain among the nation the sentiment of nearness to the unseen but mighty Head.

III. THE MORAL HARMONY EXISTING BETWEEN GOD AND THE CONSECRATED PEOPLE. The sacrifices and offerings presented were the symbolic means of preserving this harmony between Jehovah and the seed of Abraham. Offences were confessed with penitence, submission was made, prescribed observances were complied with, and the favour of God was manifested and the conscience was purged from guilt. Such harmony, only deeper and more spiritual, obtains between God and his Church on earth. The estrangement and enmity are abolished; reconciliation is effected; communion is enjoyed.

IV. THE PERPETUAL REMEMBRANCE OF INSTANCES OF DIVINE MERCY, FORBEARANCE, AND DELIVERANCE. The Hebrew people were accustomed, upon occasion of their sacred festivals, to remind one another of the blessings bestowed upon their forefathers. The Passover reminded them of their deliverance from the cruel bondage of Egypt; the Feast of Tabernacles brought to their memory the wanderings in the wilderness. On such occasions they would turn their thoughts to their marvellous national history, and especially to its more instructive and memorable incidents. Similarly in the Church of Christ, the wonderful interpositions effected by Divine power and clemency can never be forgotten; they must be held in everlasting remembrance; the mighty works which God did in old time must never lose their freshness and their wonder. The "sacred year" of the Church is filled with reminders of God's mercy, and especially of those supremely glorious and blessed events in which the Church on earth took its rise—events connected with the advent, the sacrifice, and the glory of Immanuel, and those connected with the gift of the Holy Spirit of God.

V. THE PRIVILEGE OF UNITED AND JOYFUL PRAISE. The Hebrew festivals were occasions of social and sacred joy. With them were associated the thanksgivings and the adorations of a nation. The people gave thanks to the God of gods, the Lord of lords, to him who remembered them in their low estate, who led his people through the wilderness; for his mercy endureth for ever. There is no exercise more congenial or delightful to the Church of Christ than the exercise of grateful praise. The songs of the redeemed and the righteous ever ascend to him from whom all mercies flow, to whom all praise is due. The moral nation of the saved ever lifts to heaven the tribute and offering of filial gratitude and spiritual worship.—T.

Vers. 9—12.—*Religion the parent of morality.* It is certain that God feels an active interest in all the covenants of man. The same authority that requires love to God requires love for our neighbours, equal in strength to love for self. True religion is not sublimely indifferent to the details of home and mercantile life. It designs to make every home a nursery for the Church, every shop an arena for the victories of faith. Every commercial transaction bears a testimony either for God or against him.

I. RELIGION HAS A MESSAGE FOR EVERY RANK OF HUMAN SOCIETY. Like the sun in the heavens, religion exerts the benignest influence on men of every rank and station. It teaches the monarch humility and self-restraint. It teaches princes to live for others. It teaches magistrates the value of equity and justice. It teaches merchants

principles of honesty and truthfulness. It cares for the poorest and the meanest among men; inspires them with the spirit of industry; casts a halo of beauty over the lowliest lot. Nothing that appertains to man is too insignificant for the notice of true religion. For every stage in life, from childhood to old age, religion has some kindly ministration. For every circumstance it affords some succour. It superadds dignity to the prince. It gives a kingly bearing to the peasant. It links all classes (when unhindered) in true and blissful harmony. Tyranny on the one hand, and insubordination on the other, are equally obnoxious to religion.

II. RELIGION SHEDS ITS INFLUENCE THROUGH EVERY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN LIFE. We cannot go into any assembly of men for whatever purpose they meet, where we are excused from manifesting the principles and the spirit of true religion. Whether we meet for gaining knowledge, or for industrial toil, or for political action, or for commercial pursuits, religion claims to preside over all our thoughts and plans and deeds. The shop and the mart are capacious fields for the daily exercise of Christian virtues—fields exquisitely suited for the growth and ripening of the noblest qualities. Courage can only be developed in presence of strife and peril; so our religious virtues can only be strengthened in an atmosphere of temptation. If a man is not pious and faithful and truthful in his commercial transactions, he will not be pious and faithful anywhere. This is his test; and woe be to the man who succumbs in the strife!

III. RELIGION SETS UP STANDARDS FOR ALL HUMAN ACTIONS. "Ye shall have just balances." The shekel and the homer were to be fixed standards. If fraud be allowed to creep into our commercial scales and measures, the fraud will corrupt every transaction. The very heart of the mercantile system will be poisoned. Villany secreted here would spread as from a centre to the whole circumference of commerce. It is supremely important that men establish right standards of speech and conduct. If the exchange is to prosper, it must (like the throne) be established in righteousness. Over the portals of every shop, on the beam of every balance, engraved on every coin, ought the maxim to run in largest capitals, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them!"—D.

Vers. 13—15.—*Religion a practical thing.* In the infancy of the world outward symbol was more needed for the religious instruction of men than it is to-day. In the sacred ceremonies of the temple every man had a part to take. Religious truth can better be impressed upon the mind when outward action accompanies inward sentiment. Religion requires the loyalty and service of the entire man; and if convictions of religious duty can be wrought into the soul, it is cheaply purchased by the devotement of our wealth to God. No cost is too great by which we can gain adequate appreciation of our indebtedness to God. God's requirements and our advantage are identical; they are interwoven like light and heat in solar rays.

I. RELIGION EMBRACES MANY ELEMENTS. There were required "meat offerings, and burnt offerings, and peace offerings." Each of these had a distinct meaning, and represented a distinct need of man. In true religion there enters the sentiment of reverential homage, gratitude for gifts received, acknowledgment of trangression, application for larger blessing, vows of fresh service, intercession on behalf of others. Offerings for ourselves, for our household, for the nation, are suitable; and in desiring the good of others, our benevolent nature expands, we get a larger good ourselves. The expansion of the soul is real gain.

II. RELIGIOUS WORSHIP IS BEST EXPRESSED BY PERSONAL OFFERINGS. Wheat, barley, lambs, heifers, oil, were to be the staple of the people's offerings. It is of the first importance that men should feel that God is the Creator and Giver of all good. We are absolutely dependent on his bounty. To live in the hourly realization of this dependence is blessing unspeakable. Nor can any arrangement better promote this end than the regular offering of such things as God has conferred. We owe to him our all, our whole being, our entire possessions. But he graciously accepts a part as acknowledged tribute, and gives in return a substantial blessing upon the remainder. Best of all, he uses our gift as a channel through which to pour new blessing and joy into our own souls. Our spontaneous offerings foster the growth of faith and love and spiritual aspiration. "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

III. RELIGIOUS OFFERINGS SHOULD BE PROPORTIONAL TO OUR PROSPERITY. The

man that supposes God to be an austere Taskmaster is a precipitant blunderer. He has grossly missed the truth. God does not require gigantic offerings. He requires gifts simply proportionate to our possessions. The gift of ten thousand pounds may be in the balance of righteousness only a paltry and selfish deed. The giver may be seeking only self-interests or human fame. The gift of a farthing may win the smile of Jehovah. The magnitude of our offering is measured by the motive that prompts it, the end sought, and the residue that remains. According to this spiritual calculation, the woman who gave all she had gave transcendently more than the rich donors of golden shekels. The offering of our heart's warm love is the noblest tribute which God appreciates, and unless our gifts are the outflow and manifestation of our love, they are rejected as worthless, they are like smoke in one's eyes. "That which is highly esteemed among men is often an abomination in the sight of God."

IV. FIDELITY TO GOD BRINGS THE LARGEST BENEFITS TO MEN. The end of such offerings among the Jews was "to make reconciliation for them, saith the Lord God." Yet we shall grossly err if we look upon this as a commercial bargain. Reconciliation with God cannot be purchased with gold, or tithes, or animal sacrifices. Reconciliation is the outcome of God's grace; but to bestow it upon rebellious men indiscriminately would be a waste and a crime. The grace that has originated reconciliation must prepare men's hearts to possess it. This omnipotent kindness of God moves the sinner's heart to repentance. His desire for God's friendship expresses itself in prayer and in substantial offerings. To obtain such a heavenly boon he is willing to make any sacrifice. Such good does his conscience perceive to dwell in God's favour that obedience to his will is a delight, a very luxury to the soul. As a child finds a delicious joy in pleasing its parent, and runs cheerfully to do that parent's will, so the repentant man loyally responds to God's commands, and at the altar of sacrifice implores to be reconciled. To have God as his Friend is his supreme desire, his supreme good. "In his favour is life, his loving-kindness is better than life."—D.

Vers. 18—20.—*Sanctity of time and place.* Human life on earth is conditioned by time and place. It is a necessity of our existence here that we should occupy some definite place. It is a necessity that we should live during some duration of time. We are cradled amid outward circumstance. Until the soil has matured its powers, it is moulded and modified by external surroundings. What these are, the character of the man, in great measure, will be.

I. THE SANCTUARY IS THE FOUNTAIN-HEAD OF PUBLIC RELIGION. A man's personal piety must be nourished in secret—by meditation, faith, and prayer. But a man is not an isolated creature. He is related on many sides to others. He is part of a family, part of a community. Therefore his religion must have a public aspect, and must influence all his relationships. His religion is helped by mutual action and reaction. It is fostered by common beliefs, common sympathies, common worship. The meeting-place between man and man is also the meeting-place between men and God. Scarce any man will rise above the level of religious life prevailing in the sanctuary. Here men's souls are fed and nourished and vitalized. What the sanctuary is the home will be, the nation will be, the world will be. If the fountain be clear and abundant in its flow, the streams will be full and clear also. The future of our world hangs upon our sanctuary-worship.

II. THE FOUNTAIN-HEAD OF PUBLIC RELIGION MUST BE KEPT PURE. So subtle and insidious is the working of sin, that it insinuates a way into the house of God. Base and selfish motives disfigure the beauty of our worship. Worldliness clogs the wheels of the soul, and prevents it from running in the way of holy duty. The priests and ministers of God are liable to temptation's defiling touch. The channel of communication between heaven and men may become choked with avarice and earthly ambition. The face of God may be hidden by the mists and clouds of human unbelief. The ears of men may become deaf to the soft whispers of God's voice. Sin in the sanctuary may be so subtle as to remain undetected. Our knowledge of God and of his will is so partial and imperfect that even good men sin through ignorance and error and inadvertence. Hence arises the need for the repurification of the sanctuary. No means are to be neglected by which men's minds can be more deeply impressed with the need of purity. No expenditure is waste by which the souls of men can be cleansed

and ennobled. Our very tears of repentance must be washed. The fountain of truth and piety must be kept sweet.

III. THE PURIFICATION OF THE SANCTUARY DEMANDS THE FIRST MOMENTS OF OUR TIME. The holiest work must be the work first done. The dawn of the new year is the most fitting time for this sacred service. Just as every part of the nation is hallowed for God by the hallowing of a particular spot, so the whole year is hallowed by the consecration to God of its first moments. God's claim to every part of our nature and of our possessions must be practically yielded; and we admit the obligation by bringing the firstfruit of our fields, the best of our flocks, the central spot of our territory, the first moments of the year. It is by giving that we gain. None have been losers by giving freely unto God. That which we thus give we really possess.—D.

Vers. 1—5.—*Devotement and consecration.* In the ideal kingdom there was to be a certain portion of the land devoted to sacred objects—to the sanctuary of Jehovah and to the residence of his ministers. This was called "a holy portion;" it was "an oblation unto the Lord." Thus in the very heart of the metropolis, in the most commanding situation, on the very best possible site, there was an abiding witness of the presence and the claims of God, and a continual recognition of and response to those claims on the part of the nation. In a country as Christian as ours the towers and spires of our sanctuaries, rising heavenward under every sky, standing strong and even thick among the homes and the shops and counting-houses of town and city, bear their testimony that God is remembered, that Jesus Christ is honoured and worshipped by the people of the land. But better than this devotement of land and this building of sanctuaries, good as that is, is the consecration of heart and life to the Person and the service of the Redeemer. The first and essential step in this act is—

I. THE SURRENDER OF OURSELVES TO JESUS CHRIST. *The clear recognition* that we are not our own, but his; that he claims us in virtue of his surpassing love and his supreme sacrifice; that he has "bought us with the price" of his own blood (1 Cor. vi. 20). And the *free and full surrender* of ourselves to himself; the hearty and definite acceptance of him as our Divine Teacher, Lord, and Friend; so that in the future it is the will of Christ, not our own will, that will be the determining power within us. This surrender or consecration of self necessarily includes—

II. THE DEDICATION OF OUR DAYS AND OUR POWERS TO HIS SERVICE. Being his, in the deepest thought of our mind and the strongest feeling of our heart and the most deliberate choice of our will, we can withhold nothing from him. 1. Not merely will one day in seven be given to worship in his sanctuary, but all the hours of all our days will be spent as in his presence and to his praise. 2. Not only shall we sing some psalms and utter some prayers "unto the Lord," but we shall use every faculty we possess, both of mind and sense, with the view of pleasing and of honouring him. And beyond this, or we might say, implied and included in this, is—

III. THE ASSIGNMENT OF OUR POSSESSIONS TO HIM AND TO HIS SERVICE. This includes: 1. The holding and the spending of *all* that we have in the spirit of obedience, having regard to his will in all that we do with our substance. 2. The assignment of some serious proportion of our means to the cause of God and of man, of religion and of humanity. What that proportion shall be, and what form it shall take—land, money, time, labour—is left to the individual conscience. There is no prescription in the New Testament. We are called unto liberty; but we are sacredly and happily bound to give all we can for *such a Saviour*, in *such a cause*.—C.

Ver. 8.—*Human oppression.* "My princes shall no more oppress my people." God is now upon the throne (see ch. xliii. 7), and there is no room for an earthly sovereign. The highest ruler is the "prince;" but that word stands for human authority and power, whatever be the name by which it is indicated. The promise has a reflex significance; it points to the evils which had been in past times. And Israel would have been fortunate indeed if it had escaped the common doom of oppression at the hand of its kings and princes. Many and sad are the sorrows which this poor world of ours has endured at the hand of those who should have lived to bless and not to curse it. The view, or review, is melancholy in the last degree; surely it is only too true that—

"Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless ages mourn."

I. ITS VARIOUS FORMS. These are: 1. *Impressment.* The children of Israel were plainly and powerfully forewarned of this evil (1 Sam. viii. 11—17). 2. *Taxation.* It was not long before the land groaned beneath the weight of the sovereign's levies (2 Sam. x. 4). 3. *Robbery of individual right,* and invasion of individual liberty. It needs but to mention the case of David's sad defection from right, and Ahab's senseless covetousness and weak yielding to his truculent queen, to be reminded how kings, even of Judah and Israel, defrauded men of their dearest rights. And if we extend the meaning of the word "prince" to any one in authority, or in power, or in possession, we think at once of the terrible oppressions, in this worst form, that have dishonoured the lands, darkened the homes, and blighted the lives of men under every sky and in every age of the world. 4. *Violence.*

II. ITS ESSENTIAL INIQUITY AND ENORMITY. For what is it, in truth? It is a shameful abuse of power. It is nothing less than a man taking from the hand of God the power or opportunity which he gave him in order that he might use for the good, the elevation, the happiness of his kind, and turning that power into an instrument of mischief and of sorrow. It is a heartless and shameless exaggeration by a man of his own personal importance, as if *his* comfort were everything, and an equally heartless and shameless disregard of the wishes and the wants, the joys and the sorrows, the hearts and the homes of other people. It is a guilty perversion of the purpose and debasement of the gift of God.

III. THE DEEP DIVINE DISAPPROVAL OF IT. How could the Divine Father of all human spirits see one of his children wronging, oppressing a number of his fellows, weighting them with grievous burdens or robbing them of the essential rights of their manhood or their womanhood, without deep, Divine indignation and sorrow (see Exod. iii. 7; 2 Kings xiii. 4; xiv. 26; Isa. i. 23, 24; xlix. 25; Jer. xxii. 17; Hos. iv. 18; and ch. xxii. 27)?

IV. THE DIVINE PROMISE UNDER THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST. The time shall come when princes and powers "shall no more oppress." When Jesus Christ shall exercise his benignant sway over all nations, when his spirit of righteousness and of love shall fill the hearts and regulate the lives of men, then the hard hand of oppression will be taken off every shoulder; the cruel exactions shall cease; the spirit of the Christian poet will prevail, when he says—

"I would rather be myself the slave
And wear the bonds than fasten them on him;"

cruelty shall give place to kindness, and selfishness to considerateness; and instead of men asking—How much can I get out of the multitude to fill my purse and serve my purpose? they will ask—What can I do to enlighten, to enrich, to elevate, to bless?—C.

Ver. 10.—*Piety and equity.* "Ye shall have just balances." Devotion, when divorced from morality, is worth nothing in the sight of God. Men *have* thought and taught that the one thing that God (or the gods) required was to be reverently approached by his adherents, and to receive their numerous offerings (see Micah vi. 6, 7). But his disciples did not so learn Moses, and we have not so learned Christ. Under him we have come to understand that every good tree must bring forth good fruit, and that it is he who *doeth* righteousness that *is* righteous. In this great matter of equity between man and man it is difficult to over-estimate its *religious* importance. By error and failure therein we separate ourselves from God; by rectitude and fidelity therein we commend ourselves to his loving favour. We take the injunction as covering more ground than the words themselves express; and we look, therefore, at—

I. THE RANGE OF ITS APPLICATION. "Ye shall have just balances" means, of course, more especially—Be fair in your dealings when you trade one with another; but it also means—Do what is just and upright in all your relations; do sound and thorough work at the carpenter's bench, and at the forge, when you build the house or dig the garden or plant the field; be true and faithful to your scholars, to your people, to your clients, to your constituents, in the schoolroom, or the pulpit, or the court, or the House of

Commons. Do what you undertake to do; be what you profess to be; be honest, sincere, faithful in every sphere in which you move.

II. THE DIVINE REGARD. "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good;" but if they could overlook anything they would not fail to observe whether men did or did not do justice to their fellows. If we suppose that there are some things respecting which God is indifferent, among these, assuredly, is *not* the question whether we do or leave undone what we have promised to do. From the formal compact, carefully drawn and solemnly ratified between the sovereign and the nation, down to the word of promise made by the tradesman or the sempstress, all our human dealings and undertakings are the object of the Divine regard. "I have seen" is a sentence we should do well to hear at all times and in every place when we covenant with men.

III. THE DIVINE RECOMPENSE. 1. *Approval or displeasure.* We may make quite sure that, when we are acting unfairly or unfaithfully in any relationship whatever, however we may be gathering money or reaping honour, we are laying up a large measure of Divine disapproval; the "anger of the Lord is kindled against us." But when we are acting conscientiously and equitably, however we may be disregarded and passed by on the part of our fellows, we are enjoying the favour of our Lord. 2. *Reward or penalty.* Faithfulness will bring (1) our own self-respect; (2) the esteem of those whom we serve; (3) the consolidation of our Christian character; (4) commendation and promotion in the day of Divine recompense (Luke xix. 17). Unfaithfulness will have to bear a penalty corresponding to this—the loss of self-respect, public reprobation, degradation of character, Divine condemnation in the future.—C.

Ver. 20.—*The erring and the simple.* The sacrifices under the Law of Moses were not intended for presumptuous, high-handed sins of the worst kind (see Numb. xv. 30; Deut. xvii. 12). They were designed for the less grave offences, more especially for transgressions of the ceremonial law. Here we have an injunction requiring a general, and not individual, offering to be rendered on behalf of those who had been inadvertently led into error, or who, by reason of mental simplicity, had failed to recognize their duty, and had therefore left it undone. It was valuable as recognizing the responsibility of the nation for those of its members who were less well able to take care of themselves, and it suggests to us our Christian duty to seek, for *their* sake as much as for our own, to guide or to restore them.

I. THE PRESENCE OF THE SIMPLE. We not only come into this world very variously endowed, some having inclinations and faculties of which others are not conscious at all, but our minds are of very different gradations in general capacity. Between that of the man just above imbecility and that of the greatest poet, or statesman, or organizer, how immeasurable the distance! There is quite a considerable company of the imbecile; these have been, in some countries, singularly regarded as in close connection with the supernal powers, and treated with peculiar regard on that account. Otherwise and elsewhere they are usually the objects of a good-natured tolerance. But above these and below the men and women of average intelligence are "the simple"—those who can acquire but very little learning, study how they may; who soon lose their way in reasoning, and are easily worsted in dispute; who cannot look far ahead, and may be readily taken advantage of by the unscrupulous; who cannot discern dangers ahead, and are specially open to the attacks of the enemy.

II. THE PRESENCE OF THE ERRING. It is, no doubt, "the simple" who become "the erring," whose error is due to their simplicity. But it is not all the simple who err, nor are all the erring to be found among the simple. There are those who leave the strait path without that excuse—men and women who are possessed of the ordinary intelligence and have received a very fair measure of instruction and Christian influence, who are found in paths of folly. Some temptation has proved too strong for them. And if they are not among the flagrantly immoral, yet is there, in their case, a deviation from the straight line of truthfulness, or of purity, or of sobriety, or of reverence, or of the becoming and the consistent—a deviation which detracts seriously from the worth and beauty of their character, and which makes their best friends concerned or even alarmed about them.

III. OUR SACRED DUTY, WHICH IS OUR PRIVILEGE, CONCERNING THESE. 1. *To guide*

and guard. Those on whom God has conferred greater power, and who can consequently see more clearly where evil lies and where danger begins, should esteem it their most sacred and bounden duty to befriend, to preserve, to save, those who are feebler and more exposed. We have our powers, no doubt, that we may take care of ourselves, that we may secure and enrich ourselves. But this is only one part, and it is quite a small part, of our duty and of our opportunity. We live to love and bless. God has made us what we are and given us what we have, for the express purpose that we may serve those who are around us, and more particularly those who are nearly related to us, by defending them when they are assailed, by timely warning against attack, by arming them for the evil hour, by encouraging them in the midst of the battle when they are distressed, by enabling them to make the most of the resources which they possess. By wise direction and strengthening companionship many a simple soldier has been enabled, on moral as well as material fields, to fight a brave and faithful battle, and to win the victory and the crown. 2. *To restore.* "Ye who are spiritual restore such a one" (Gal. vi. 1). Here is not only a sacred duty, but a very high privilege. To win a fortune, to establish "a house" or a family, to build up a great reputation, to rise to conspicuous eminence,—this is laudable, honourable, attractive enough, or at least it may be so. But there are things which are higher and better than these. And of these nobler things there are few that rank higher in the estimate of Christ or will give our own hearts deeper satisfaction in the calmer and truer moments of our life than the *act of restoration.* To lead our erring brother or sister back again from the highway or the byway of evil into the road of rectitude, into the path of life,—this is emphatically and pre-eminently the *Christian* thing to do; it is to reduce to action the Divine instruction, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."—C.

Ver. 21.—*The moral of the Passover.* This great feast, which was so solemnly though hastily inaugurated, and so solemnly and joyously renewed after a discreditable lapse (Exod. xii.; 2 Chron. xxx.), had an historical and also a religious aspect.

I. ITS HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE. It recalled one great event of surpassing national interest; it brought back to memory the pitiless cruelty, the blind obduracy, the false confidence of Egypt, and, at the same time, the sad sufferings and the trembling hopes of Israel. "With what solemn awe and yet with what thrilling expectation did their forefathers in the land of bondage partake of that strange meal! With what eager carefulness did they see that the saving blood-stream marked the lintels of the door which would shut in their dear ones! And what a morning on the morrow! What joyous congratulations in each Hebrew family when they *all* met, in life and health, on that memorable march! And what terrible consternation in those Egyptian homes where the angel of death had *not* passed by but had struck his fearful stroke! It was the hour of Jehovah's most signal interposition; it was the hour of national redemption. They might well remember it "in all their dwellings through all their generations."

II. ITS SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE. The keeping of the Passover was fitted to exert a most invaluable influence in two ways. 1. It was calculated *to bind the nation together* and so to preserve its unity; or, when that unity was broken, to induce a kinder or more brotherly feeling between the separated communities, and to prevent further dissolution. For nothing is a stronger tie than common sacred memories—the vivid recollection of scenes, of sufferings, of struggles, through which common ancestors have passed. Such memories allay ill feeling and strengthen existing "cords of love." 2. It was calculated to *preserve their allegiance to their Divine Deliverer.* For the slaying and eating of the lamb in their homes: (1) Spoke to their hearts of the vast and the immeasurable obligation under which they stood to the Lord their God; it presented him to their minds as the Lord their Redeemer, who had with a mighty hand rescued them from tyranny and oppression, and placed them in the land of plenty, in homes of peace. (2) Summoned them to the liveliest gratitude for such signal mercy, for such abounding and abiding goodness. (3) Charged them to live that life of purity and of separateness from heathen iniquity of which the unleavened bread spoke to them while the feast lasted (see homily *in loc.*, in Lev. xxiii. 4—8).

1. It is well to signalize *individual* mercies; it is well, by some wise habit or institution, to call to remembrance, for renewed gratitude and consecration, some special deliverance granted us by the God of our life during our past career. 2. It is well to

commemorate common, *national favours*; to recall, with thankfulness and devotion, the goodness of God shown in great national conjunctures. 3. It is best to perpetuate the one great, surpassing *redemption of our race*; to join in the commemoration of that supreme event when the Lamb of God was slain for the sins of the world.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLVI.

This chapter falls into three divisions. The first (vers. 1—15) gives supplementary directions for the prince and the people of the land when engaged in solemn acts of worship; the second (vers. 16—18) furnishes the prince with instructions as to how he may dispose of his portion or inheritance; the third (vers. 19—24) adds particulars about the sacrificial kitchens for the priests and for the people.

Vers. 1—15.—The supplementary directions contained in these verses relate to the worship of the prince and the people on the sabbaths and the new moons (vers. 1—7) and at the appointed feasts generally (vers. 8—15).

Ver. 1.—Like the preceding sections which introduced distinctly new enactments in Ezekiel's Torah (see ch. xliv. 9; xlv. 9, 18), this properly opens with **a Thus saith the Lord God,** since it refers to the worship that should be celebrated **at the gate of the inner court which looketh toward the east.** Ewald, after the LXX. (ἡ πύλη ἡ ἐν τῇ αὐλῇ τῇ ἐσωτέρᾳ), changes the text so as to read *the outer court gate*, and understands the statement here made to be a qualification of that contained in ch. xliv. 1—3. It is, however, the inner east gate to which the present clause alludes, and the announcement made concerning it is that, like the outer east gate, it should be **shut on the six working days**; literally, *the six days of the business* (comp. 1 Sam. xx. 19); but that, unlike the outer east gate, it should be **opened on the sabbath** (literally, *in the day of the sabbath*) **and in the day of the new moon,** both of which days had been marked under the Law, and should in future continue to be marked, by special sacrificial celebrations.

Ver. 2.—The reason for the opening of this inner east gate should be that the prince might enter it as far as its threshold, and stand there worshipping by the posts of the gate, while his burnt offerings and his peace offerings were being prepared by the priests, who, rather than the prince, were the proper ministers for conducting the sacrificial ceremony. The prince should reach his station at the threshold of the inner gate, **by the way of the porch** of that (or, *the*) **gate without**; but whether this signified that he should pass through the eastern gate of the outer court, and so advance towards the inner east gate, as Ewald, Keil, Kliefoth, and Plumptre assume, or, as Hengstenberg, Schröder, and Smend suppose, that he should enter the inner gate by the way of the porch of the gate, *i.e.* from the outside, from the outer court into which he had previously entered through either the north or the south outer gates, cannot be decided. In favour of the former may be urged the consideration that it seems more natural to apply מְרוּץ to the outer gate than to the outer court, since no one could enter the inner gate except from the outer court, unless he were already in the inner court; but in favour of the latter is (1) the stringent character of the language in ch. xliv. 1—3, which expressly declares that the outer east gate should not be opened, and that *no man should enter in by it*, thus scarcely admitting of an exception; and (2) the statement in vers. 9, 10 of the present chapter, that in the "appointed feasts" the prince and the people alike should enter the outer court either by the north or the south gate, since, if any of these "feasts" fell upon a sabbath, this regulation would not be practicable, if the prince and the people were required to enter by different doors. The question, however, in itself is immaterial. The points of importance are that the prince should worship in the porch of the inner gate, and that, on finishing his worship, he should retire, and that the gate should not be shut until the evening.

Ver. 3.—**Likewise** (or, *and*) **the people of the land** should be accorded permission to worship at this inner gate, only not like the prince, in its porch, but at its door, yet on the same occasions as he, **in the sabbaths and in the new moons.** Kliefoth, who takes "this gate" to signify the outer gate, through which, according to his interpretation of ver. 2 (see above), the prince should pass so as to reach the inner east gate, conceives the import of the present verse to be that, while the prince should be permitted on the sabbaths and new moons to pass through the eastern gate, the people "should remain standing in front of the outer east gate,

and, looking through it and the opened inner east gate, should pray before Jehovah." This, however, is unnatural, even on the hypothesis that the prince should pass through the outer east gate, and the view of Keil is greatly preferable, that "this gate" was *the inner east gate*, and that the people should reach it (even if the prince did not) by entering the outer court through the north gate or the south.

Vers. 4, 5 describe the sacrifices the prince should offer unto the Lord on the sabbaths. (1) A burnt offering of **six lambs and a ram**, all without blemish. The Mosaic Law, or so-called priests' code, demanded two yearling lambs (Numb. xxviii. 9). (2) A meat offering, consisting of **an ephah** of fine flour for **a ram**, and for the lambs **as he shall be able to give**; literally, *a gift of his hand*—not a handful, but, as ver. 7 explains, what his hand can attain unto (comp. Lev. xiv. 31; xxv. 26), *i.e.* as much as he can, with **a hin of oil** to an ephah, for which again the Law required two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mingled with oil (Numb. xxviii. 9).

Vers. 6, 7 specify the corresponding sacrifices for the new moons. (1) A burnt offering of **a young bullock without blemish, six lambs, and a ram**, with which may be compared the two bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs of the Mosaic Torah (Numb. xxviii. 11—15). (2) A meat (or, meal) offering of **an ephah** for the bullock, **an ephah** for the ram, and for the lambs **according as his hand shall attain unto** (comp. ver 5; and the similar expressions in Lev. v. 7, 11; xii. 8), with **a hin of oil** to an ephah. This also is less than that which had been demanded by the Law, viz. three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mingled with oil for each bullock, two-tenths for the ram and one-tenth for every lamb (Numb. xxviii. 11—15). The Torah of Ezekiel omits the sin offering of a he-goat, which had a place in the Torah of Moses.

Ver. 8 begins an ordinance relative to the mode of conducting worship at the appointed festivals (ver. 9; comp. ch. xxxvi. 38; xlv. 17; Lev. xxiii. 2; Hos. xii. 9), by indicating first how the prince should enter and depart from the temple. According to Kliefoth and Keil, the prince's entrance and departure should be **by the way of the porch** of the outer, according to Hengstenberg, Smend, and Currey, of the inner, east gate (see on ver. 2).

Ver. 9.—**But when the people of the land shall come before the Lord.** As the preceding verse referred to the prince's entrance into and departure from the inner gate, this was intended to regulate the movements of the prince's subjects when they should enter the outer court at any of the festal seasons—not the high festivals alone, such as the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles, which are usually denominated חַגִּים, but the ordinary appointed feasts (מוֹעֲדִים), including, besides the high festivals, the sabbaths and the new moons and such other religious celebrations as were or should be prescribed in the new Torah. In order to prevent confusion, and that all might be conducted with propriety (comp. 1 Cor. xiv. 40), no one should depart by the gate through which he had entered, but by the opposite, *i.e.* he who had entered by the north gate should retire through the south gate, and *vice versâ*. Hengstenberg thinks the reason for this regulation "cannot be sought in the endeavour to avoid a throng," since "in that case it must have been ordained that all should go in by the same gate and go out by the opposite one;" it must, he holds, have been "a theological one," viz. "to signify that each should go out of the sanctuary another man than he came in."

Ver. 10.—**And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in, etc.** Schröder, but without reason, would restrict this regulation to the celebrations of the first and seventh days of the first month (ch. xlv. 18, 20); Hengstenberg would confine it to the high festivals (ch. xlv. 21, 25); Kliefoth, Keil, and commentators generally apply it to all the statutory feasts or appointed seasons and times for united sacrificial worship. The regulation seems to teach that in such observances at least the prince should stand on a level with the people, and both enter and retire by the same door as they.

Ver. 11 specifies **the meat** (or, *meal*) **offering** which should be presented in the feasts (חַגִּים), or high festivals, as the Passover and Feast of Tabernacles, and in the solemnities (מוֹעֲדִים), or appointed feasts generally, viz. **an ephah to a bullock, and an ephah to a ram, and to the lambs as he is able to give** (comp. vers. 5, 7), **with a hin of oil to an ephah.** This is the same meat offering as was appointed for the new moons (see ver. 7), but slightly different in quantity from, though the same in principle as, that stipulated for the seven days of the Passover (ch. xlv. 24).

Ver. 12 determines the procedure in case of the prince resolving to offer privately, on his own account, **a voluntary burnt offering or peace offering**; better, *a free-will offering* (נְדָבָה), a sacrifice prompted by the heart of the offerer, as opposed to one legally enjoined (Exod. xxxv. 29; Lev. xxii. 23), which might be either *a burnt* or *a peace offering*. In this case the east inner gate should be opened to him as on the sabbath days (see

ver. 1), but, differently from what occurred on the sabbath, it should not remain open till the evening (ver. 2), but should be shut immediately the prince's offering was done.

Vers. 13—15 supply closing instructions for the daily sacrifice. The daily burnt offering should be **a lamb of the first year**; literally, *a son of his year*; whereas the Law of Moses required a lamb twice a day (Exod. xxix. 38—42; Numb. xxviii. 1—8). The daily meat (or, meal) offering to accompany this should be **the sixth part of an ephah**, instead of a tenth as under Moses, **and the third part of a hin of oil**, instead of a fourth as prescribed by the earlier legislation, **to temper with**—לְרַסֵּךְ (from רָסַךְ, a word peculiar to Ezekiel), *to moisten* or mix with—**the fine flour**. These sacrifices should be offered **every morning**; literally, *morning by morning*; but not every evening as in the Mosaic Law. This difference was not accidental, but intentional, though why in the new order of things the evening sacrifice should have been omitted does not appear. Currey thinks Ezekiel did not intend to enumerate all the sacrifices of the Law, but only a few of them, and that, though not mentioned, the evening sacrifice may have been designed to be retained. The presentation of these sacrifices was not to be the special duty of the prince, but should devolve upon the community as a whole, who are now addressed as "thou" (vers. 13, 14) and "they" (ver. 15), and who should act in its fulfilment through their priests.

Vers. 16—18.—Instructions for the prince as to how he should deal with his property are summarized in three regulations, introduced by the solemn formula of "Thus saith the Lord" (comp. ver. 1; ch. xlv. 9).

Ver. 16.—*The first regulation.* The prince might dispose of a portion of his royal property (see ch. xlv. 7, 8) by presenting part of it **as a gift to any of his sons**. In this case what was gifted should belong to his son or sons in perpetuity, should be his or theirs as his or **their possession by inheritance**; it should never again revert to the prince.

Ver. 17.—*The second regulation.* Should the prince, however, bestow a portion of his inheritance on one of his servants, what was thus bestowed should not belong to that servant in perpetuity, but should be regarded simply as a temporary loan which should be his **till the year of liberty**, שְׁנַת הַדְּרוֹר, *i.e.* the year of free flowing in general—comp. Exod. xxx. 23, מָר־דְּרוֹר, pure myrrh (Authorized Version) or flowing myrrh (Revised Version)—hence *the year of release*; after which it should return to the prince. Smend thinks Ezekiel could hardly have had in view the year of jubilee (Lev. xxv. 10; xxvii. 24), else he would not have employed the term "liberty," which Jeremiah (xxxiv. 8, 15, 17) uses to denote the freedom regained by Hebrew bondmen in the seventh year (Exod. xxi. 2; Deut. xv. 12). But (1) the seventh year was only a year of the release of bondmen, not of the reversion of property, and to this rather than to that Ezekiel refers. (2) The year of jubilee might properly be called the "year of liberty," since in it both slaves were emancipated and property was liberated. And (3) Ezekiel's phraseology is not framed (nor is Jeremiah's) in imitation of either Exodus or Deuteronomy, the latter of which in particular speaks of "the year of release" (שְׁנַת הַשְּׁמִטָּה), but adheres closely to the style of Leviticus, which, in fact, it presupposes. שְׁנַת הַדְּרוֹר can only signify the year of *the release*, i.e. the well-known year of emancipation. The last clause should be rendered, as in the Revised Version, "As for his inheritance (generally), it shall be for his sons," or, as Keil translates, "Only his inheritance it is," *i.e.* the prince's; "as for his sons, it shall be for them."

Ver. 18.—*The third regulation.* The prince in all cases should endow his sons (or others) out of his own, and not out of his subjects' possessions, of which they have been violently robbed. A good rule for other princes besides this, and for owners of property in general.

Vers. 19—24.—The sacrificial kitchens for the priests and for the people. This passage has been transferred by Ewald to ch. xlii., and inserted after ver. 14; but the Exposition will show it must have originally stood where it is.

Ver. 19.—**After** (or, *and*) **he**—*i.e.* the measuring man, who had hitherto acted as the prophet's conductor—**brought me through the entry, which was at the side of the gate**. This was the inner north gate, from which the prophet had been conducted to the front of the house in order to receive the sacrificial Torah (ch. xliv. 4), and to which; when this was finished, he had been seemingly led back. From this gate, then, he was taken by his guide along the entry or passage (ch. xlii. 9), which ran towards and extended in front of **the holy chambers of** (or, *for*) **the priests, which looked toward the north**, and which have already been described (ch. xlii. 1—14). Arrived at the western corner of the chambers, he perceived **a place on the two sides**—or, *on the hinder part* (Revised Version)—**westward**. The translation in the Authorized Version was obviously suggested by the dual form

יִרְכָתַיִם, which properly signifies "on both sides," but when applied to the tabernacle (Exod. xxvi. 23) or temple (1 Kings vi. 16), always describes the back part or rear. That a similar "place" existed on the south side is more than probable; though Smend thinks there was not a "place" on the south. The LXX. omits the words after "place," and supplies κεχωρισμένος, "separated." Keil finds in the description here given of the passage towards the holy chambers a proof that this section could not have stood originally after ch. xlii. 14, as in that case no such description would have been needed. Nor would the language in ch. xlvii. 1, "and he brought me back," have been required or appropriate had the prophet not in the mean while changed his place, which he does to visit the holy chambers.

Ver. 20.—The "place" was designed as a kitchen where the priests should boil the trepass and the sin offerings and bake the meat (or, meal) offering, *i.e.* cook the portions of the sacrifices they should eat in their official capacity (see ch. xlii. 13). The Law of Moses (Lev. viii. 31) required the flesh to be boiled (and probably also the flour to be baked) at the tabernacle door. The last clause, **that they**, *i.e.* the priests, **bear them**, *i.e.* the offerings, **not out into the utter** (or, *outer*) **court, to sanctify the people**, is by most interpreters understood in the sense of ch. xliv. 19 (which see). To this, however, Kliefoth objects that the conception of deriving ceremonial sanctity from contact with such offerings is completely strange to the Old Testament (see Hag. ii. 12), and accordingly he connects the words, "to sanctify the people," with the "baking" and "boiling" of the preceding clause.

Vers. 21, 22.—The prophet next observed, as his guide led him round the outer area, **that in every corner of the court there was a court**—literally, *a court in a corner of the court, a court in a corner of the court*—**and that these were courts joined of forty cubits long and thirty broad.** The word "joined" (קְשֻׁרוֹת) has been variously translated: by Gesenius (see 'Heb. Lex.,' *sub voce*), as "vaulted" or "roofed," with which Hitzig seems to agree; by the LXX., whom Böttcher and Ewald follow, μικρά, equal to *contracta*; by Kliefoth, "uncovered;" by Hävernick, "firm," "strongly built;" by Smend, "separated;" by Hengstenberg and Schröder, after the Talmudists (*fumum exhalantia*), "smoking" or "made with chimneys" (Authorized Version margin); but is probably best rendered by the Revised Version, Keil, Currey, after Gesenius ('Thesaurus,' p. 1213), "enclosed," meaning *muris cincta et januis clausa*. According to the last clause of ver. 22, **these four corners were of one measure**; or, *one measure* was *to the four cut-away places*, i.e. corners, מְחֻקָּעוֹת being the hoph. participle of קָצַע, "to cut off." This last word is omitted in the LXX. and the Vulgate, Hitzig, and Smend, the *puncta extraordinaria* showing that the Massorites regarded it as suspicious.

Ver. 23.—**And there was a row of building round about in them**; but whether סְבִיב meant a "wall," "fence," or "enclosure," as Gesenius, Hävernick, and Ewald translate, or "row," "series," "a shelf of brickwork which had several separate shelves under which the cooking-hearths were placed," as Keil explains, the obvious intention was to describe the range of **boiling places** which were built along the inside walls of these corner courts, as the next verse states.

Ver. 24.—**These are the places** (literally, *houses*) **of them that boil**—hence kitchens—**where the ministers of the house** (or, *temple*) —*i.e.* the Levites (see ch. xliv. 11, 12)—**shall boil the sacrifice of the people**; *i.e.* the portions of the people's offerings which fall to be consumed by the priests.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 3.—*The people's worship.* Although there was an elaborate hierarchical system in the Hebrew religion, care was taken that the people generally should take an important part in the service. They were not admitted to the most sacred parts of the temple enclosure, but they were expected to come up to the temple and share in its worship.

I. GOD LOOKS FOR THE PEOPLE'S WORSHIP. If this was expected under the Law, much more is it looked for in the gospel dispensation, according to which all the Lord's people are priests, and all are admitted to the most holy place through the rent veil. God has personal dealings with each soul, and it is right for each soul to come up before him in grateful adoration. The service in which the people do not take part cannot be said to be of much use to them. It is true that there is value in intercession, and we should all plead one for another. Still, we cannot grant to any priest a power of attorney to execute our religious contracts in our stead.

II. THE PEOPLE CAN ENJOY WORSHIP. When the heart is in it, no joy on earth can be more rich and full.

"Lord, how delightful 'tis to see
A *whole* assembly worship thee!"

The dreariness of Sunday just arises from the fact that so many people who go to church really take no part in the service. It must be wearisome to sit as spectator of a feast of which one does not partake. But when once a living interest is taken in the worship, and the spectator becomes a guest at the table, the whole character of the scene is changed, and the joy of worship is experienced. Then it is possible to say, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord;" and "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord."

III. WORSHIP SHOULD BE ADAPTED TO THE PEOPLE. It may not be possible to make it all that we would desire in form and external expression. Indeed, popular worship can never reach the standard of fastidious æstheticism. In trying to satisfy the refined taste of one or two cultured persons, we may simply destroy the means of worship for the majority of a congregation. In that case the service, while it reaches the perfection of art, loses its spiritual character and degenerates into a mere musical performance. We should always bear in mind the practical end of worship, always see that it is in touch with the people and expresses and helps the devotion of the congregation generally. The church should be the people's home of worship, not the shrine of a privileged aristocracy. Christ was one of the people.

IV. WORSHIP MUST NOT BE DEGRADED IN ORDER THAT IT MAY BE MADE POPULAR. There is considerable danger of running into this opposite extreme in the effort to attract and interest the indifferent. But then the whole object is defeated. We may get the people and amuse them for a while, but what is the use of doing so if we sacrifice the great end of assembling together—the reverent adoration of the holy God? Fine art may be sacrificed, but spiritual reality must be retained. Religion, the essence of which is reverence, cannot be helped by mere vulgarity. The people's worship must be *worship*.

Ver. 10.—"*The Prince in the midst of them.*" The centre of the glory of restored Israel was to be found in her prince. No prince appeared, however, who was able to accomplish the expectations of prophecy until the advent of Jesus Christ. He is "the Prince in the midst of his people."

I. CHRIST IS THE PRINCE OF HIS PEOPLE. 1. *He is one of them.* The Jew's Prince was a Jew, not a foreigner. Christ is "the Firstborn among many brethren." He is a true Man, the Son of man. He has been over the Christian course, and has himself lived the pattern Christian life. 2. *He is their Head.* Christ stoops to save, but he rises again to rule. Even during his earthly humiliation he plainly took the lead among his disciples. Now he is seated on his throne in heaven, reigning over his Church.

II. CHRIST IS IN THE MIDST OF HIS PEOPLE. During his earthly ministry he dwelt among men. Unlike John the Baptist, who retired to the solitude of the wilderness and to whom people had to come by leaving their homes, Jesus went about through the towns and villages of Israel, eating and drinking with all sorts and conditions of men. Although he is no longer visible, we have his assurance that he will be always with his true disciples (Matt. xxviii. 20). Christ does not simply visit his people in moments of great need; he is always with them. He does not select some choice followers for his companionship, to the neglect of the great body of his people, like a prince who enjoys himself with his courtiers and takes little or no notice of the bulk of the nation. Jesus is *in the midst* of his people, right in the centre of the population of the kingdom of heaven.

III. CHRIST ENTERS INTO HIS PEOPLE'S WORSHIP. When the people go in, *i.e.* to the temple, the Prince shall go in. The Prince must worship with his people. Prince and peasant must bow together before their common Lord. Every purely human prince needs to confess his sins as a penitent and to utter the publican's prayer, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Christ the sinless cannot take part in our confession except by sympathy. But he is with us throughout our worship. Christian worship at its

highest is communion with Christ. In that most sacred act of worship, the Lord's Supper, we seek especially for the living presence of Christ. For surely every Protestant must admit that there is a real Presence—not in the bread or wine—but in the hearts of Christ's worshipping people.

IV. CHRIST GOES WITH HIS PEOPLE INTO THE WORLD. When the people go forth their Prince is to accompany them. It would be sad if Christ only met his people in their worship. He is more needed in work, in temptation, in trouble. Christ is with us in the world as well as in the Church. He does not confine his sympathy to ecclesiastical circles. But when we have some hard task to accomplish or some severe trial to face his presence may be especially looked for. The good leader will be in the thick of the fight, cheering his soldiers just where the battle is hottest. Our Captain of salvation accompanies us in the holy war against sin. If courage fails, this should be our cheering thought—the Prince is in the midst of us!

Ver. 13.—*The morning sacrifice.* I. THE MORNING SHOULD BE DEDICATED TO GOD. Then especially worship is fitting. It is sad to begin the day without prayer. But the fresh morning devotion has a preciousness of its own. 1. *Then we awake from sleep.* It is happy indeed to wake to some good thought of God. He has preserved us through the long hours of darkness. New strength has come by refreshing rest, and this is God's gift. Therefore grateful thoughts should rise with morning worship. 2. *Then we commence a new day.* Has the fig tree been fruitless hitherto? Yet in his long-suffering patience the Master has not cut it down. Here is another opportunity for fruit-bearing. Shall this new one be wasted as were so many of bygone days?

"Lo! here hath been dawning
Another blue day:
Think, wilt thou let it
Slip useless away?

Out of eternity
This new day is born;
Into eternity
At night will return.

"Behold it aforetime
No eye ever did;
So soon it for ever
From all eyes is hid."

(Carlyle.)

II. EVERY NEW MORNING SHOULD BE DEDICATED ANEW. We may think we have dedicated our lives to God. Yet we need to renew the dedication—to dedicate our days as well as our years. Every day brings its fresh duties, and these need the grace of Christ, that they may be rightly discharged. Every day also brings its new temptations. We cannot live to-day in the grace of yesterday. The manna fell daily to feed the Israelites in the wilderness, and it would not bear keeping for the morrow. Christ teaches us to pray for daily bread: "Give us *this* day our daily bread."

III. THE BEST DEDICATION OF THE NEW DAY IS BY SACRIFICE. The Israelites dedicated each day with morning burnt offerings. Although we have outgrown the necessity of using these symbolical offerings, we can never outgrow the requirement of sacrifice. It is well to begin the day in the spirit of sacrifice. First there should be the desire to slay all sin and renounce all bad habits. Then comes the positive self-denial and cross-bearing for the sake of Christ. Is there any new sacrifice of love that may be offered on the new day? Throughout the day this thought should pervade the mind of the Christian: "I am a servant of Christ. It is my part to-day to study my Master's will, and live for his glory."

IV. THE DEDICATED DAY WILL BE A BLESSED DAY. It may not see any great event. But it will be a day spent for God, in lowly service, perhaps, yet in holy living. Such a day is one sure stepping-stone towards heaven.

Vers. 16, 17.—*The son and the servant.* The Jewish Law made careful provision to

prevent the alienation of land from the families to which it orginally belonged. The son might inherit permanently; but the servant could only receive a gift of land for a time, which would cease at the year of jubilee. Here was a marked distinction between the privileges of sonship and those of service. Now St. Paul draws attention to this distinction from another point of view, when contrasting the gospel with the Law. There is a religion of worship, and one of service.

I. THE LIFE OF WORSHIP HAS A PERMANENT INHERITANCE. This is the case with the spiritual experience of Christianity. 1. *The Christian is a son.* (1) He is begotten by God. (2) He is adopted by God. (3) He owns Christ for his Brother. (4) He is admitted into God's presence as a child at home. (5) He has the liberty of a son and his privileges. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." God makes his counsels known to true Christians. 2. *The son's inheritance is permanent.* (1) For life. The grace of God given to the true Christian child will not desert him in after-years if he still looks for it and follows its guidance. God does not treat his people as the favourites of a day, whom a prince pampers while the whim is on him, and then capriciously flings aside; his favour is enduring like his eternal love. (2) After death. The Christian inheritance is but tasted on earth; the better part of it awaits us beyond the grave. It is like the inheritance of Israel, a small part of which was on the coast of the Jordan, while that river had to be crossed before the main portion could be reached. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv. 8). We do not resign our Christian inheritance when we lie down to die; on the contrary, then we prepare to enter into the promised land in all its length and breadth.

II. THE LIFE OF SERVITUDE HAS BUT TEMPORARY PRIVILEGES. 1. The promises of the *Mosaic religion* were for this world, as Bishop Warburton proved with redundancy of argument, in his famous book on the 'Divine Legation of Moses.' Therefore the Jew stood below the Christian in regard to his prospects of future good. But there are far lower lives of servitude than that of the pious Jew. 2. Christ spoke of the *slavery of sin* (John viii. 34). Now, this degraded servitude has its rewards. Sin gives gifts to its slaves. But they are not enduring possessions. 3. *The bondage of worldliness* holds many men. This thraldom promises great rewards. Riches and pleasures come in its train. The chains are forged of gold, and at first the weight of them is not felt. But the rewards of sin and worldliness are of brief duration. Their fruits may be sweet at first, but the after-taste of them is unendurably bitter. Even if no disappointment is met on earth, the worldly inheritance must be resigned at death. The slave of sin and the world can carry none of his treasures with him to the unseen future.

Ver. 18.—*A warning to the great.* I. THE GREAT ARE RESPONSIBLE TO GOD. The prince is the leader and supreme ruler of Israel. His rank and privilege lift him into the most exalted position. Yet he is responsible to God, and his duty is definitely marked out for him. Even the most "irresponsible" ruler of a despotic state cannot escape from responsibility in the sight of Heaven. Prince as well as peasant will have to give account of himself before the judgment-seat of God. Moreover, God directs and controls the movements of the most powerful earthly magnates. He who said to the sea, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed," "put his hooks" in the proud ruler of Egypt (ch. xxix. 4).

II. THE GREAT ARE TEMPTED TO EXCEED THEIR RIGHTS. Men who enjoy the largest scope and who own the widest possessions must come to the confines of their territory. The biggest park has its fence. Now, a common temptation is to despise the best things within a man's right, in envy for what lies beyond them. Thus, with all the wealth of the royal demesne, Ahab is sick with covetousness for Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings xxi. 4). The possession of considerable power aggravates the temptation of the great to go beyond their rights. It is difficult for the despot to avoid degenerating into a tyrant.

III. THE GREAT ARE WARNED AGAINST OPPRESSING THE PEOPLE. The danger of power passing over to tyranny is the besetting temptation of persons in influential positions. This danger alone raises a question as to the wisdom of entrusting overmuch power even to the best men. In the abstract, an irresistible paternal government

might seem to be likely to secure the greatest good of a nation. But for this to be satisfactory we must not only endue the ruler with supreme wisdom, we must also eliminate from his character every atom of selfishness.

IV. THE GREAT ARE NOT MORE FAVOURED BY GOD THAN ARE OTHER PEOPLE. They have unique privileges, but these are bestowed in the form of a solemn trust. God is no respecter of persons. He cares for all his children. He is the people's God, and the Friend of the poor. They who can find no earthly protector may look to Heaven for deliverance, for he who heard the cry of the Hebrews when they groaned under the oppression of the Egyptian bondage, and saved them from Pharaoh and his host, is still mighty to help the needy.

V. GOD'S EQUAL GRACE FOR THE PEOPLE AS WELL AS THE GREAT SHOULD LEAD ALL TO TRUST HIM. If God only favoured the so-called privileged classes, the multitude might well turn aside from religion in despair. But since God has ever been on the side of the oppressed, and has ever cared for the people, it is foolish to distrust him, and ungrateful to disregard his goodness. Whatever else the great may seize upon, they cannot take away the poor man's religion. Here is a prize of permanent possession. It would be well if all knew and loved the God who cares for all.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 3.—*Worship.* The prophet, having described by anticipation the sacred city and temple, having represented the several duties of prince, priest, and people, having given regulations for sacrifices and festivals, now proceeds to depict the sacred services for which all this preparation has been undertaken. The rulers of the nation, the ministers of religion, and the people of the land are beheld uniting in the solemn function of spiritual worship. This is the loftiest exercise of the Church, whether upon earth or in heaven. The worship of the individual soul yields in beauty and in grandeur to that sacrifice of worship in which multitudes, willingly, gratefully, and joyfully unite.

I. THE OBJECT OF WORSHIP IS GOD ONLY. In this a distinction existed between Israel and the heathen people around; for whilst these worshipped gods many and lords many, the chosen people worshipped Jehovah, and him alone. In the Church of Christ, whilst many of the great and holy in former times are remembered with gratitude and veneration, worship, in the strict and proper sense of the term, is reserved for the Supreme and Eternal, who shares his honour with none beside. His glorious perfections demand the homage and adoration of his intelligent creatures; and the more his character is studied, the more will it appear worthy of all the admiration and reverence which can be brought into his sacred presence.

II. THE WORSHIPPERS ARE THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD. The great and the small, the young and the old, the learned and the lay, are all qualified to present to the Eternal the spiritual tribute which is his due. For it is in virtue of their humanity, their participation in human nature, experience, and powers, and not in virtue of any peculiar possession or acquisition, that they are summoned to unite in the worship of their Creator. The idea of the prophet was one in a high degree expanded and comprehensive; yet even this fell short of the great reality as apprehended by the Apocalyptic seer.

III. THE SEAT OF ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP IS THE HEART. It is true that this spiritual doctrine is especially that of Christianity, of the New Testament. But the attentive reader of the Psalms and prophecies of the old covenant is aware that the enlightened Hebrews were superior to a merely formal and mechanical view of worship. Sacrifices and offerings were known and felt to be of no avail unless they expressed the deep and sincere emotions of the inner nature. Thus it must ever be; he who is a Spirit must be worshipped in spirit and in truth.

IV. THE CHARACTER OF TRUE WORSHIP CORRESPONDS WITH THE NATURE AND NEED OF THE WORSHIPPERS. 1. There must be acknowledgment of the Divine attributes, contemplated with reverence. 2. There must be humiliation and confession of sin. 3. There must be the presentation of the due offering of gratitude to him from whom all blessings proceed. 4. There must be petitions and intercessions for needed good.

V. THE EXPRESSION AND FORM OF WORSHIP MUST VARY WITH THE INDIVIDUAL WORSHIPPER AND HIS CIRCUMSTANCES. It is narrow bigotry to insist upon one form of spiritual service or of uttered adoration and prayer. There are occasions upon which worship may be spontaneous and ejaculatory; and other occasions upon which it may be elaborate, artistic, and protracted. The worship of the individual who is momentarily touched by what is beautiful in nature, or impressive in the Word of God, is as acceptable as the liturgy of a cathedral service, or as the fervent service of praise in which expression may be given to a nation's gratitude for signal favours.

VI. THE SEASONS FOR WORSHIP ARE BOTH OCCASIONAL AND CONTINUOUS. The text speaks of the "new moons" and the "sabbaths" as opportunities for solemn and public services of devotion. Yet we read a little later of the daily offering. The truth is that there is no season when worship is unsuitable on the part of man or unacceptable to God. Yet there is wisdom in the appointment both of regular and of special seasons and occasions of worship. None can worship God too much, or too reverently, or too fervently.

"From every place beneath the skies
Let the Creator's praise arise!
Let the Redeemer's Name be sung
In every land, by every tongue!"

T.

Ver. 11.—*Feasts and solemnities.* In all religions there are instituted festivals and public functions, which serve to manifest and to sustain the religious life of the community. This was especially the case with Judaism, which prescribed many stated solemnities. Even the Christian religion has its appointed sacraments, and, in addition to these, which were instituted by the Divine Founder, the Church has at various periods set apart times and seasons for certain public observances, participation in which has been found conducive to religious earnestness and vitality, as well as to ecclesiastical prosperity.

I. RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS AND SOLEMNITIES ARE JUSTIFIED AS HARMONIZING WITH THE VERY NATURE OF THE HUMAN MIND. It is not in human nature to proceed in one undeviating and monotonous course. Life is best lived when the regular and stated order of things is varied by occasional diversities. As in ordinary existence, so in the religious life, it is well that there should be variety, and that men should be invited to special engagements of a spiritual nature, whether of humiliation or of rejoicing, whether commemorative or anticipatory. Men do not cease to be men because they are Christians, and Christianity is not only compatible with, it is promoted by, special sacred festivals, fasts, and other observances.

II. RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS AND SOLEMNITIES ARE JUSTIFIED BY THE NATURE OF DIVINE INTERPOSITIONS WHICH ARE OCCASIONAL AND SPECIAL. The Jews had, in the course of their national history, experienced wonderful interventions of Divine mercy upon their behalf. And it is evident that the solemnities, which formed so beautiful a feature of the Jewish religion, were for the most part designed to celebrate the great things which God had done for his chosen people. The treatment of the nation by God had not been of a uniform and regular character; and it was natural that there should be a correspondence between the national history and the national religion, between what Jehovah had effected on behalf of his chosen people, and what that people did in acknowledgment of the Divine mercy. Similarly with our Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide; we celebrate the special mercy of God in the advent, the death, and the resurrection of our Saviour, and in the fulfilment of "the promise of the Father" in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

III. RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS AND SOLEMNITIES ARE JUSTIFIED BY THE SUCCESSIVE GENERATIONS WHO NEED TO BE IMPRESSED BY THE SAME GREAT SPIRITUAL TRUTHS. With reference to the Jewish Passover, we are expressly assured that one purpose of its observance was to train the rising generation in the reverent memory of the signal favours of God. When the son of the household asked, "What mean ye by this service?" the answer was given that it commemorated the loving-kindness and faithfulness of the God of the Hebrews, who had delivered his chosen people from destruction and assured to them his lasting protection. How much more powerfully was such a lesson

taught by such ordinances than by words! The youthful mind is especially impressed by sacred solemnities, and by their observance provision is made that the attention of successive generations shall be directed to the glorious truth that God has visited and redeemed his people.—T.

Ver. 12.—*A free-will offering.* There were certain sacrifices and offerings which the pious Jew was bound to present. To omit compliance with certain regulations upon these observances would have been disloyalty. But there were other offerings which were optional, which were left to the feelings and to the circumstances of the worshipper. They were only brought when there was an especially lively sense of the Lord's goodness, and an especial desire to express consecration and devotion. Gifts prompted by gratitude and love are the only gifts which are of value in the sight of him who searcheth and looketh upon the heart.

I. FREE-WILL OFFERINGS ARE BECOMING ON THE PART OF MAN. Man's nature is distinguished by the glorious prerogative of liberty. There is for him no moral excellence or beauty in constraint. The heart is free, and it is the only gift which in God's sight is precious; all other gifts have value so far only as they are the expression of the love and loyalty of the spiritual nature. Whatever is dedicated to God of the worshipper's free-will is a human and a worthy offering, such as a being with man's prerogative of liberty may justly offer.

II. FREE-WILL OFFERINGS ARE ACCEPTABLE TO GOD. False religions sometimes extort from devotees, by the motive of terror, gifts and offerings, services and sacrifices, which would otherwise be withheld. They must be fictitious deities that are represented as gratified with such offerings as these. But the character of God is such as assures us of his willingness to receive what is freely and cheerfully presented. Not that he can be enriched by anything that his creatures can present. "Of thine own," they acknowledge—"of thine own have we given thee." But all is precious to him that reveals a loyal, loving, and grateful heart.—T.

Ver. 13.—*The daily offering.* There is nothing inconsistent in the combination of special solemnities observed upon certain occasions with the regular daily worship. They are not contradictory of, but complementary to, each other. If there is an adaptation between annual festivals and one principle of human nature, there is an equal adaptation between another tendency of that nature and the constantly recurring daily sacrifice of prayer and praise. Accordingly, in this same chapter are found directions as to the yearly feasts and instructions concerning the daily sacrifice. How just and reasonable is this latter provision for our religious life is apparent from—

I. THE DAILY MERCIES WHICH HAVE TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED. The tokens of God's goodness and bounty, forbearance and grace, do not come to us at long intervals. They are incessantly bestowed. He daily loadeth us with benefits. He giveth us day by day our daily bread. The mind that is at once observant and sensitive is, at the contemplation of renewed, unceasing favours, ready to exclaim, "Every day will I praise thee, and I will bless thy Name for ever and ever."

II. THE DAILY SINS WHICH HAVE TO BE CONFESSED, AND FOR WHICH FORGIVENESS HAS TO BE ASKED. The offerings and sacrifices of the temple included not only thank offerings, but sin and trespass offerings. The Israelitish worshipper appeared before Jehovah as a penitent supplicating forbearance and pardon. There is no human worshipper who has not occasion to come into the presence of the God of holiness with shame and confusion of face. Daily transgressions and omissions call for daily acts of humiliation and daily entreaties for mercy. The self-righteous may conceal from themselves this fact, and the hypocritical may seek to conceal it from God. But those who know themselves, and are sincere in their devotions, will implore the clemency and the forgiveness promised by the righteous Sovereign to those who seek reconciliation through the mediation of the Divine Redeemer.

III. THE DAILY GUIDANCE AND STRENGTH WHICH ARE NEEDED, AND WHICH HAVE TO BE SOUGHT FROM GOD. Devotion is primarily the offering of the heart, its love and grateful praise, to God. But it includes also the seeking of blessings which it is his prerogative to bestow. There is no day which does not bring with it duties that can be properly fulfilled only with Divine assistance, trials which can only be passed

through securely and beneficially through the direction which God's Holy Spirit alone can vouchsafe. If this is so, how reasonable is the provision for daily communion with God! Thus only can we be assured of that grace which will enable us so to pass through the discipline of earth that it may be the means of meetening us for the service and the joys of heaven.—T.

Vers. 1—3.—*The consecration of time.* God has mercifully imparted to human life a pleasant variety. It might have been, especially as the result of transgression, a dull monotony. It might have been day without night; a continuous season, neither summer nor winter; working days in perpetual succession. But as in nature he has given to us the delightful spectacle of mountain and valley, land and water; as in the circumstance and experience of life we have youth, manhood and old age; so also we have secular days and sacred.

I. NATURAL OBJECTS ARE APPOINTED AS LESSON-BOOKS IN RELIGION. Sun and moon and stars not only serve as luminaries of our earth, they are appointed as signs. They signify unseen and spiritual realities. The sun speaks to us of another Fount of light —the Sun of Righteousness, who illuminates man's soul. The moon, with her many phases, serves as an emblem of the Church, receiving her light and heat from the Sun. Every mountain appeals to us to rise above the common level of a mortal's life. Every flower points to spiritual beauty and usefulness, while it preaches likewise a lesson of man's brief opportunity. So when the gate that looked towards the east was opened, it was that the worshippers might be moved and lifted heavenward by the sight of the rising sun. This privilege was repeated on the day when the new moon appeared. Incarnate as we are in flesh and blood, we need to learn from every quarter lessons of spiritual moment. God deigns to instruct us by the service of a thousand teachers. If our eyes are open wide we may learn gospel lessons on every side.

II. GOD IS SPECIALLY ACCESSIBLE TO MEN AT SPECIAL SEASONS. He came near to Jacob in a special manner by the vision at Bethel. He came down on Horeb, and talked with Moses as a man talketh with his friend. Especially he has ordained the sabbath as a time when he will commune with men. Even ignorant men have discovered that rest of body and intellect one day in seven is a benefit to the man and to the nation. But without doubt God sees a deeper reason for the institution of the sabbath than do we. Certain it is that in the olden time he regarded the observance of the sabbath as emphatically the maintenance of men's covenant with him. The violation of the sabbath obtained his withering frown. And the intrinsic value of the day is as great now, although its violation be not followed by the summary punishment of God. The sabbath day is peculiarly a day "in which he may be found." Having spread the banquet for human souls, the King comes near to see his guests.

III. FOR THE HIGH ENJOYMENT OF GOD'S PRESENCE THE INNER DOOR OF THE HEART MUST BE OPENED. The hindrance to intimate intercourse with God is on our side. On God's side there is eager willingness. "We are not straitened in him." He is prepared to make his presence a joyous reality as much as ever he did to saints in the olden time. We may walk with him as Enoch did, if we will. We may have communications with him as Abraham did, if we will. The hindrance is in our own will. If only the door of the heart be unbarred, if only our strongest affections wait on the threshold to give him welcome, he will meet with us, and give us all the comforts of his friendship. Other guests are often entertained, such as vain ambitions, animal inclinations, worldly cares, evil companionships, and we are ashamed to bring in the heavenly King. Alas! too often the door is locked on the inside.

IV. IN RELIGION ONE CAN BE HELPFUL TO MANY. The prince exerts an influence either for evil or for good over multitudes. His example is especially contagious. If he is sincerely pious, he can induce many to serve the Lord. But even the prince may not bring the sacrifice near to God. His rank and office are limited by Divine authority. In the service of the sanctuary he may not be supreme. Even the king must draw nigh to God through the offices of the priest. The priest likewise renders useful service to multitudes. He speaks for them to God. He conveys substantial good from God to them. So every man, in proportion to his faith and piety and prayerfulness, may win over others to the side of virtue—to the side of God. Each of us occupies a centre, and by a holy character we can draw, by the magnetic power of love

Godward, men and women from a wide circumference. As "one sinner destroyeth much good," so one saint may save alive a myriad of his fellow-men.

V. OUR HOLIEST WORSHIP ON EARTH IS ONLY ON THE THRESHOLD OF THE TRUE TEMPLE. So encompassed are we with a material nature, that we can get no further than the margin of the eternal kingdom. We can see the great realities "only through a glass darkly." Yet we make them more obscure by our spiritual indolence and our undue attachment to earthly pursuits. Above everything, candour and openness of soul are needed to allow the light of truth to stream in. We can make earthly and carnal all the sensibilities of our souls by the habitual neglect of God's presence. But if we wish honestly and earnestly to know God more, and to have friendly intercourse with him, we can. The open door of the heart will be a welcome to God well understood.—D.

Ver. 9.—*The soul's growth in goodness.* The wisdom of God has been clearly evinced in the spiritual training of the human family. The forbidden fruit was the wisest test that God could impose on Adam. The simple sacrifice of a lamb was the fittest training of men's souls during the patriarchal age. And as the race developed from infancy into youth, and from youth to manhood, God's methods for unfolding and maturing the spiritual nature have been singularly appropriate. The highest good man can obtain is the development of his spirit—the expansion of his highest powers. To this end all religious worship is designed to contribute.

I. MAN'S SPIRITUAL LIFE BEGINS AT ZERO. In all God's works we see development from a simple germ to highest perfection. For high reasons God does not produce perfected natures at a single stroke. Even this unconscious earth passed through long stages of preparation before it was fit for human habitation. The rose does not reach perfection except by patient culture. Everything about us is in transition, and is moving onward in a course of development. Art is not yet perfected. Our bodily nature begins with a microscopic germ, and slowly develops towards maturity. If anything is plainly revealed in Scripture, it is *this*—that the life of the soul begins at the lowest point and is intended to reach the highest. We do not begin our earthly career with robust faith in the unseen God, nor yet with a sensitive conscience, nor yet with strong aspirations after moral excellence. All this is the result of research and self-discipline and prayer. Clearly there is an intimate analogy between all the varieties of life known to us. With respect to the grain there is first the seed, then the blade, then stalk, then ear, then full corn in the ear. With respect to the body there is babyhood, infancy, youth, manhood, maturity. And the life of the soul begins with a thought, a feeling, a wish, a prayer. It begins in the understanding, passes into the conscience, touches the emotions, moves the desires, constrains the will, moulds the life. It begins in feebleness and develops into world-controlling power. Probably the main reason for this is that the spiritual life, to have any beauty or excellence, must be the spontaneous desire and endeavour of the man himself. If, by the constitution of his nature, a man *must* be holy and benevolent, there would be no merit in holiness, no worth in benevolence. Therefore scope is given to a man, greater or lesser, to foster the young germ of spiritual life, and to develop it unto the noblest perfection. This is our supreme business during our mortal career.

II. MAN'S SPIRITUAL LIFE CAN BE NOURISHED BY ACTS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP. The temple in the olden time, and Christian sanctuaries now, are designed by God for this end. 1. *Instruction is provided.* In the former ages this was furnished in the form of rite and emblem; *now*, almost entirely, by oral utterance. There is conveyed information respecting God, his nature, his kingdom, his will, his doings; information respecting man, his nature, his fall, his redemption, his possible elevation to purity, his destinies in a future state. 2. *Access to God is allowed.* Self-inspection is encouraged. Interior sin, in inclination and desire, is detected. The eye is turned inward upon the soul. The best sensibilities of the heart are strengthened and expanded. A vision of holiness is obtained. New aspirations begin to bud. The sacred influence of God is felt upon the soul. True prayer is stimulated. 3. *Right habits are confirmed.* Every man is more or less influenced by his fellow-man, so contact with holy men produces salutary impressions upon every sensitive mind. The forceful presentation of truth upon the moral nature tends to elevate it. Convictions of religious duty

are inwrought. Regard for God's revelation and for God's will is deepened. Resolution to follow a right course is often formed. The energies of the soul are braced up for high endeavour. Familiarity with God and with eternal things is increased. As a plant grows and buds under the influence of the vernal sun, so a man's soul unfolds amid the surroundings of public worship. 4. *A Divine influence is present.*

III. MAN'S SPIRITUAL LIFE IS EITHER HELPED OR CHECKED BY EVERY VISIT TO THE SANCTUARY. This is the main truth taught in this verse. Men were not allowed, in the second temple, to retrace their steps. They might not depart by the same path as that by which they approached the altar. Without doubt this was ordained in order to leave an impressive lesson on their minds. The law yet remains. It is written on man's spiritual constitution. It is written in the very structure of the temple. No man leaves God's house precisely the same man as he went in. He is either worse or better for his visit. If he has yielded in any measure to the claims of God, he is the better. If he has resisted them afresh, he is the worse. 1. Let us contemplate *the foolish man.* (1) If he enter by the gate of self-righteousness he will in all probability leave by the gate of insensibility. His soul will be hardened under the process. The sun that melts wax hardens clay. (2) If he enter by the gate of unbelief he will leave by the gate of despair. Foregone conclusions fasten like a bandage upon the eyes. The root of blindness is a perverse will. The man without God is without hope. (3) If he enter by the gate of formal custom he will leave by the gate of bondage. His carnal fetters will have been more firmly riveted by the visit. 2. Let us contemplate *the wise man*—the beneficial visit. (1) He who enters by the gate of inquiry leaves by the gate of knowledge. (2) He who enters by the gate of penitence leaves by the gate of peace. (3) He who enters by the gate of prayer leaves by the gate of triumph. (4) He who enters by the gate of consecration leaves by the gate of immortal hope.—D.

Vers. 13—15.—*The essence of religion.* Inasmuch as true religion is a daily help and solace to men, it was needful to impress this upon the minds of the Jews by a daily sacrifice. In order to obtain the highest good from God, we must dedicate our whole self to God. It is in giving that we receive. Our interests and God's interests are not distinct; they are identical. Yet this is a difficult lesson for men to learn. They persist in judging that time taken from secular pursuits is time misspent; that money removed from material fructification is property waste. Surely God does not need our poor gifts. And if he accepts them, it is in order that they may be made channels of blessing to the worshipper. The essence of religion is hearty self-sacrifice.

I. RELIGION CONSISTS IN COMPLETE SELF-CONSECRATION. The burnt offering was wholly consumed. Outward and formal acts of worship do not constitute acceptable religion. The ceremony may only be the show and not the substance, the shell without the kernel, the body without the soul, the channel without a living stream of love. If love be the central germ of piety, then love constrains the dedication to God of all I am—all I have. Such dedication is only reasonable. I cannot lay my finger on any organ of my body, or on any virtue in my soul, or on any item of my substance, which does not belong to God by right; hence in completest consecration I only fulfil my obligation; I give no more than is due. God has given to his children all he has—has not withheld his Son; therefore the obligation is intensified. No lesser repayment of the debt would be complete. Self-dedication is God-like. As when a man carries his gold to the royal mint that it may become current coin for exchange, he receives it back with the image and superscription of the sovereign upon it; so, when we give ourselves wholly to God, we get a nobler self; God's image is superadded. We're most our own when most completely his.

II. RELIGION IMPOSES ON MEN A PERPETUAL OBLIGATION. The burnt offering was to be repeated "every morning." The surrender of self to God is not an isolated act done once for all. It means the continuous habitude of the soul. As we open our shutters every morning or withdraw our blinds in order to let in the light, so every morning we need to open all the doorways of the soul afresh to give access to God. The tempter is ever at hand to induce us to forget God; our fleshly nature asserts itself—thrusts itself in between us and God; therefore there is daily need to renew our sacred vows. As the fields are refreshed every summer morning by another baptism

of dew, so may our souls be refreshed by new communion with God. Each day God wisely requires fresh service; we cannot withhold it. Each day will bring new cares, new toils, new opportunities for making God known; therefore we require new strength. Each day God has some new blessing to convey: we should be ever ready to receive it. Self-devotement should be repeated with the dawn of every day. As new as God's gifts to us should be our dedication to him.

III. RELIGION AIMS AT PRODUCING HOLY CHARACTER. The lamb was required to be "without blemish." This was a daily and emphatic reminder that God expected, for his society and his service, a perfect character. Better still, this was a tacit promise that God would, by his gracious expedients, make us perfect. We aspire after perfection. We are ashamed of our imperfections. And we give ourselves up to God, that, by his creative Spirit, he may mould us unto perfection. This is our confident hope that perfect trust may lead to perfect holiness. By daily consecration of every thought and feeling and purpose, we shall step by step attain the likeness of our Saviour. This is God's purpose, and it cannot be frustrated.

IV. RELIGION ASKS THE DEVOTEMENT OF OUR YOUNG LIFE. The daily offering consisted of a "lamb." Why this particular sacrifice was commanded can have but one explanation; viz. that our earliest years should be consecrated to God. While religion in its final end is sublime, in its essential principle it is simple enough. It is love—love to the worthiest Being, and a child has capacity to love. God takes especial interest in children. When Jesus took into his arms young infants and blessed them, he said substantially, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father!" Inasmuch as God regards things which are not as yet as though they were, he smiles with Fatherly complacency on faith in embryo—on the tiny buds of character not yet unfolded. The first breath of prayer ascends to heaven more fragrant than temple incense.

V. RELIGION REQUIRES FOR ITS ACTS DUE PREPARATION. "Thou shalt prepare." As considerable pains were required to prepare the burnt offering, so thought and self-inspection are required for acts of piety. To gain advantage and enjoyment from worship, we must bring to the exercise concentration of mind, tender feeling, intelligent expectation, steadfast trust. The farmer has to plough and pulverize his soil before he casts in his seed, and, unless our hearts have their furrows open, the seed of truth will disappear as soon as sown. The eye must be trained in order to gain vision; the hand must be trained in order to dexterous industry; so too the soul must be trained in order to enjoy high communion with God. Desultory talk is not *prayer*; for prayer is the outgoing of the whole man Godward.—D.

Vers. 16—18.—*Earthly sovereignty not absolute.* Great temptations surround kings, inducing them to tyranny. Their own will is enveloped within military force. Obsequious flatterers pander to royal power. For self-interest, soldiers usually take sides with the prince. Hence a first lesson for princes to learn is that right is superior to might. The voice of justice is the voice of God.

I. THE PRINCE IS A SUBJECT OF A HIGHER MONARCH. No earthly king holds absolute sway over his subjects. In truth, the mightiest monarch is only a vassal-king. He rules in the place of God. He has to listen to the summons, "Thus saith the Lord." He is appointed to administer the laws of God. He is amenable to a superior authority, and must render an account of his rule at the judgment-bar of heaven. To no king has God transferred the right of absolute rule. The term of a tyrant's rule is entirely at the disposal of God. At any moment the King of kings can terminate a prince's rule, and require a report of his doings. At the very height of a boastful tyranny he has often suffered an humiliating fall. A prince is simply a superior servant.

II. THE PRINCE IS UNDER OBLIGATION TO HIS SONS. As he is not absolute master of his subjects, neither is he absolute master of his possessions. Even a king has no freehold in his property. It is held under lease. He has only a life-enjoyment in it. Death dissolves all earthly covenants. If he has sons, they are his heirs. By the indisputable law of God they have a right in reversion. As the prince had full enjoyment of his estates during his mortal life, so his sons shall have undiminished enjoyment of the estates during their life. By no principle of law or justice can a prince claim to

extract from the ancestral estates more than a life-enjoyment, nor encumber his estates for successors. He must learn to identify himself with his children, to treat them as part and parcel of himself. Checks on selfishness God everywhere imposes. In the household of God sonship carries with it complete heirship.

III. THE PRINCE IS UNDER OBLIGATION TO HIS SUBJECTS. Obligations among men are mutual. Kingship has duties as well as rights. If subjects are under obligation to serve and support their prince, so too princes are under obligation to protect the lives and property of their subjects. Rightly understood, the prosperity of the people is identical with the prosperity of the king. The throne cannot be strong if the people are impoverished. The king and his people are united by a common bond of interest. The invasion of his subjects' rights is suicide to his authority—suicide to kingship. "No man liveth unto himself." A selfish and avaricious policy is moral madness. No other principle is so favourable to prosperity and joy as wise benevolence.

IV. THE PRINCE IS UNDER OBLIGATION TO HIS SERVANTS. No man is more dependent upon the service of others, no man so dependent, as a prince. His time and strength are as limited as any other man's, yet the demands of duty are enormous. For his personal needs he requires servants; for his family wants he requires servants; and for every deparment of public government he requires servants. In proportion to the value of the services, remuneration must be made. If the prince be accounted mean or parsimonious, he will lose dignity, reputation, and influence. Yet his generous impulses must never be allowed to violate principles of justice. He must never trench on others' possessions to discharge a personal debt. Yet, alas! this has often been done! Kings stand among the greatest criminals. Secret service to the king has been paid in stolen coin. Yet restitution must some day be made, for God is always on the side of righteousness. And to every prince he says, "Be just before you are generous."—D.

Vers. 2, 3, 10.—*Distinction and equality in the kingdom of God.* We have here a distinction drawn between one citizen and all the rest. The prince was to enter by the way of the porch of the east gate and stand by the post of the gate, "at the porch of the inner court," while the people were to stand at a distance, at the outer gate (vers. 2, 3); yet on other occasions the prince and the people together were to enter in and to go forth together without regard to social distinction (ver. 10). We are thus invited to consider that, in the coming kingdom, of which this whole vision was prophetic, there were to be both distinction and equality. And we have both.

I. DISTINCTION WITHIN THE KINGDOM. In the gospel of Jesus Christ there are: 1. *Higher posts in the Church* to be occupied by a few; there have been (or are) apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, deacons, etc.; and there is a sense in which these have a priority of position over the ordinary members of the Church. 2. *Higher order of service* to be rendered by some. While every citizen of the kingdom of God has to serve by living the truth, by illustrating its essential principles in daily action in every sphere, it is given to some to commend the saving truth by powerful and persuasive utterances, or by unanswerable and imperishable literature; and yet again it is given to others to contribute still nobler service by suffering, or even dying, "for the sake of the Lord Jesus" and in confirmation of the truth (see Acts v. 41; Phil. i. 29; Rev. vii. 13, 14). 3. *Longer period of service* granted to some than given to others. (1) There are those who are called and blessed from childhood to old age, who serve Christ and his cause through all the stages of human life, with the gathered wisdom of long and varied experience. (2) There are those who have not heard the Divine summons until the greater part of life is over, and these can only bring their wasted and rapidly declining faculties to the altar of holy service. Yet is there essential—

II. EQUALITY IN THE KINGDOM. Inasmuch as: 1. All must enter at the same gate. To one and all alike, however favoured or however denied, Jesus Christ is the one open Door by which to come (John x. 7). 2. All must advance by the same spiritual course—by means of watchfulness and prayer and holy usefulness, by learning of God, by gaining from God, by working for God. 3. All must give account of their Christian life, and the use they have made of their life-opportunity (Luke xix. 12—26;

2 Cor. v. 10). 4. All will be judged on principles of perfect equity (Matt. xxv. 20—23; Luke xii. 48; 2 Cor. viii. 12).—C.

Vers. 4—12.—*The optional and the obligatory in the kingdom of God.* 1. Here are minute and positive prescriptions, requiring exact conformity and allowing no deviation. The burnt offering was to be six lambs and one ram—no more and no less (ver. 4). In the day of the new moon—at that particular time—the offering was to include a young bullock (ver. 6). They who entered in by the north gate were to go out by the south gate, and *vice versâ* (ver. 9). These (and other) instructions were in full and careful detail, and there was to be no departure from them. 2. On the other hand, the prince might, at certain hours and on occasion, bring an offering that was purely "voluntary;" one that was "voluntarily" presented unto the Lord (ver. 12). Room was left for spontaneity, even in the midst of these very specific requirements. In the kingdom of Jesus Christ we have these two orders of service—the obligatory and the optional, the plainly and positively enjoined, and the voluntary; and that Christian life is not complete which is lacking in either.

I. THE OBLIGATORY. Of those things pertaining to our Christian life which are indispensable there are: 1. *At its entrance:* (1) humility (or penitence); and (2) faith,—that living faith in Jesus Christ which includes the acceptance of him as the Saviour of the soul and the Lord of the life. 2. *Throughout its course:* (1) worship, or the approach of the human spirit to the Divine in prayer, in thanksgiving, in consecration; (2) obedience, or the conformity of conduct to those precepts which are an essential part of Christian morals; (3) love, including not only the "love of the brethren," or a special attachment to those who are the friends and followers of Jesus Christ, but also a genuine pity for those who are far from him and need to be brought nigh, and a practical determination to seek and to win these erring souls.

II. THE OPTIONAL. There is room for the voluntary as well as for the necessary in our Christian life. 1. In the *particulars of our worship.* We have one main principle binding upon all men everywhere (John iv. 23, 24), but it is left to our individual choice—to our own judgment and conscience—at what times, in what forms, within what buildings, with what kind of human ministry, we shall draw nigh to God in true and pure devotion. 2. In the minutiæ of *obedience.* What shall be the rules and the regulations we shall lay down for the observance of the great principles of purity, of temperance, of equity, of veracity, of reverential speech, of courtesy,—these are not to be found in any Christian directory; they are to be decided upon in the sanctuary of every consecrated spirit and of every cultivated conscience. 3. In the *measure and methods of loving service.* What proportion of our income, what amount of our time, what order of personal effort, we shall devote to the cause of Christ and in the interest of our fellow-men,—this rests with every individual Christian man to decide. These must be, in some sense and degree, "*voluntary* offerings."—C.

Ver. 18.—*Losing and keeping the inheritance.* The subject of this commandment is "the inalienable nature of the prince's possession, and the sacred regard he must pay to the peoples';" its object was to legislate so that "no temptation might exist to spoil the people of their proper inheritances, as had been too often done in the days that were past." By the words of the text we are brought in contact with—

I. THE HEBREW IDEAL OF FAMILY INHERITANCE. The Mosaic legislation contemplated keeping the land in the occupancy of the same tribe and of the same family from generation to generation. It was not in the power of the occupier to sell it or to will it away from the family; and although it might be mortgaged, it reverted to the original possessor (or his family) at the year of jubilee. The ideal was that of all the families of the nation being interested and engaged in the happy, honourable, and fruitful employment of agriculture. In this case there would be no superabounding wealth on the one hand, and no degrading poverty on the other hand; while every Israelite would have the deepest interest in preserving the integrity of his country's freedom, and would be contributing to its wealth. Such an ideal as this is hopelessly impossible in such a time as this, but in a primitive and pastoral age it was one calculated to secure the largest possible measure of individual happiness, domestic comfort, and national prosperity.

II. ITS PARTIAL FAILURE AND ULTIMATE DISAPPEARANCE. Such a provision must have been attended with great difficulties in the way of realization. Dissipation on the one hand and avarice on the other would almost inevitably lead to loss and to appropriation. And there is no doubt they did. As time went by the land became lost to the families to whom it was originally apportioned (Josh. xix. 51). And when the time came for the great and sad deportation to other lands, the entire arrangement was broken up; finally the Jews *were* "scattered, every man from his possession;" and, dispersed among the Gentiles, they became the least pastoral or agricultural, and the most trading and financing, of any people on the earth. Where, then, does this prediction find—

III. A PLACE IN THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST? It will find it, in substance, in: 1. Provision for the material well-being of the people of the land. As the result of Christian principle acting at both ends of the body politic, elevating the character and therefore the condition of those at the bottom, and leading those at the top to devote their resources and employ their (legislative and other) opportunities in the interest of the people, there will gradually ensue a wide distribution of comfort and prosperity. Abject poverty and superfluous possession will give place to universal competence, education, morality, piety—in fact, national well-being. Many forces will have to contribute to this result, and it may be a long time coming, but it must be the issue of a true and practical Christianity. There are other "inheritances" beside that of land and wealth which need to be preserved, and which a Christian family or a Christian Church should devoutly determine to maintain. There must be: 2. The perpetuation of the fair heritage of an honourable name, a reputation for family goodness or wisdom that has come down many generations. 3. The preservation of the precious deposit of sacred truth.—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLVII.

As the first part of Ezekiel's vision (ch. xl.—xliii.) dealt with the temple, or "house," and the second (ch. xliv.—xlvii.) with the ritual, or "worship," so the third, which begins with the present chapter (ch. xlvii., xlviii.), treats of the land, or "inheritance," setting forth first its relation to the temple (vers. 1—12) and to outlying countries (vers. 13—21), and secondly its division among the tribes, inclusive of the priests, Levites, sanctuary, prince, and city (ch. xlviii. 1—23), with a statement of the dimensions and gates of the last (vers. 24—35). The opening section of the present chapter (vers. 1—12) is by Kliefoth and others connected with the second part as a conclusion, rather than with the third part as an introduction; but, taken either way, the passage has the same significance or nearly so. If read in continuation of the foregoing, it depicts the blessed consequences, in the shape of life and healing, which should flow to the land of Israel and its inhabitants from the erection in their midst of the sanctuary of Jehovah, and the observance by them of the holy ordinances of Jehovah's religion. Viewed as a preface to what follows, it exhibits the transformation which the institution of such a cultus would effect upon the land before proceeding to speak of its partition among the tribes. The prophet's imagery in this paragraph may have taken as its point of departure the well-known fact that the waters of Shiloah (Isa. viii. 6; Ps. xlvi. 4) appeared to flow from under the temple hill, the Pool of Siloam having been fed from a spring welling up with intermittent action from beneath Ophel (see Conder, 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 334; King, 'Recent Discoveries on Temple Hill,' p. 173). To Isaiah "the waters of Shiloah that go softly," had already been an emblem of the blessings to be enjoyed under Jehovah's rule (Isa. viii. 6); to Joel (iii. 18) "a fountain," coming forth from the house of the Lord and watering the valley of Shittim, or the Acacia valley, on the borders of Moab, on the other side of Jordan, where the Israelites halted and sinned (Numb. xxv. 1; xxxiii. 49), had symbolized the benefits that should be experienced by

Israel in the Messianic era when Jehovah should permanently dwell in his holy mount of Zion; to Ezekiel, accordingly, the same figure naturally occurs as a means of exhibiting the life and healing, peace and prosperity, that should result to Israel from the erection upon her soil of Jehovah's sanctuary and the institution among her people of Jehovah's worship. Zechariah (xiii. 1; xiv. 8) and John (Rev. xxii. 1, 2) undoubtedly make use of the same image, which, it is even probable, they derived from Ezekiel (comp. Ecclus. xxiv. 30, 31, in which Wisdom is introduced as saying, "I also came out as a brook from a river, and as a conduit into a garden. I said, I will water my best garden, and will water abundantly my garden bed; and, lo, my brook became a river, and my river became a sea").

Ver. 1.—Having completed his survey of the sacrificial kitchens in the outer court (ch. xlvi. 19—24), the prophet was once more conducted by his guide to the door of the house, or of the temple in the strict sense, *i.e.* of the sanctuary. There he perceived that waters issued (literally, *and behold waters issuing*) from under the threshold of the house, *i.e.* of the temple porch (see ch. xl. 48, 49; and comp. ch. ix. 3), eastward, the direction having been determined by the fact that the forefront of the house stood or was toward the east. He also noticed that the waters came down (or, *descended*)—the temple having been situated on higher ground than the inner court—from under the threshold, from the right side *of* the house—literally, *from the shoulder* (comp. ch. xl. 18, 40, 41, 44; xli. 2, 26; xlvi. 29) *of the house*, the *right*. The two clauses are not to be conjoined as by Hengstenberg, Ewald, and Smend, as if they meant, *from underneath the right side of the house;* but kept distinct, to indicate the different features which entered into the prophet's picture. The first was that the waters issued forth from under the threshold of the house; the second, that they proceeded from the right side or shoulder of the house, *i.e.* from the corner where the south wall of the porch and the east wall of the temple joined (see ch. xli. 1); the third, that the stream flowed on the south side of the altar, which stood exactly in front of the temple porch (see ch. xl. 47), and would have obstructed the course of the waters had they issued forth from the porch doorway instead of from the corner above described.

Ver. 2.—As the prophet could not follow the stream's course by passing through the east inner gate, which was shut on the six working days (ch. xlvi. 1), or through the east outer gate, which was always shut (ch. xliv. 1), his conductor led him outside of the inner and outer courts by the north gates (literally, *to the north* (outer) *gate*), and brought him round by the way without unto the outer gate by the way that looketh eastward. This can only import that, on reaching the north outer gate, the prophet and his guide turned eastward and moved round to the east outer gate. The Revised Version reads, *by the way* of the gate *that looketh toward the east;* but as the east outer gate was the *terminus ad quem* of the prophet's walk, it is better to translate, *to the* gate *looking eastward*. When the prophet had arrived thither, he once more beheld that there ran out—literally, *trickled forth* (מְפַכִּים occurring here only in Scripture, and being derived from פָּכָה, "to drop down," or "weep")—waters. Obviously these were the same as Ezekiel had already observed (whence probably the omission of the article; see Ewald's 'Syntax of the Hebrew Grammar,' p. 34, Eng. transl.). On (literally, *from*) the right side; or, *shoulder*. This, again, signified the corner where the east wall of the temple and the south wall of the gate joined.

Ver. 3.—Having emerged from the corner of the east outer gate in drops, the stream, which had not swollen in its passage across the outer court and under the temple wall, speedily exhibited a miraculous increase in depth, and therefore in volume. Having advanced eastward along the course of the stream an accurately measured distance of a thousand cubits (about one-third of a mile), the prophet's guide brought, or caused him to pass, through the waters, when he found that they were to the ankles; or, were *waters of the ankles*, as the Chaldee, Syriac, Vulgate, Keil, Kliefoth, Ewald, and Smend translate, rather than "water of the footsoles," as Gesenius and Hävernick render, meaning, "water that hitherto had only been deep enough to wet the soles." The ὕδωρ ἀφέσεως, or "water of vanishing," of the LXX., is based on the idea of "failing," "ceasing," "coming to an end," which appears to be the root-conception of אָפֵס (see Gen. xlvii. 15, 16; Ps. lxxvii. 9; Isa. xvi. 4).

Ver. 4.—At a second and a third distance of a thousand cubits the same process was repeated, when the waters were found to be first waters to the knees, and secondly waters to (or, *of*) the loins. The unusual expression, מַיִם בִּרְכָּיִם, instead מֵי, as in the similar expressions before and after, may have been chosen, Keil suggests, in order to avoid resemblance to the phrase, מֵימֵי רַגְלַיִם, in

Isa. xxxvi. 12 (Keri)—not a likely explanation. Hävernick describes it simply as an instance of bold emphasis. Schröder breaks it up into two clauses, thus: "waters, to the knees they reach." Smend changes מֳתְנַיִם into מֳתָנַי.

Ver. 5.—After a fourth distance of a thousand cubits, the waters had risen, or, *lifted themselves up* (comp. Job viii. 11, in which the verb is used of a plant growing up), and become waters to swim in—literally, *waters of swimming* (שָׂחוּ occurs only here; the noun צָפָה only in ch. xxxii. 6)—a river that could not be passed over, on account of its depth. The word נַחַל was applied either to a river that constantly flowed from a fountain, as the Arnon, or to a winter torrent that springs up from rain or snow upon the mountains, and disappears in summer like the Kedron, which had seldom any water in it (see Robinson's 'Bibl. Res.,' i. 402). That Ezekiel's river broadened and deepened so suddenly, and apparently without receiving into it any tributaries, clearly pointed to miraculous action.

Ver. 6.—Then he . . . caused me to return to the brink of the river. The difficulty lying in the word "return" has given rise to a variety of conjectures. Hengstenberg supposes the prophet had made trial of the river's depth by wading in (perhaps up to the neck), and that the angel caused him to return from the stream to the bank. According to Hitzig, the measuring had taken place at some distance from the stream, and the prophet, having come up to his guide from the bank after making trial of the water's depth, was once more conducted back to the river's brink. Hävernick conceives the sense to be that the prophet, having accompanied the angel to the point where the stream debouched into the Dead Sea, was led back to the river-bank. All difficulty, however, vanishes if, either with Schröder we refer וַיְשִׁבֵנִי to a mental returning, as if the import were that the angel, having ascertained that the prophet had "seen" the river's course, now told him to direct his attention to the bank, or, with Keil and Kliefoth, translate עַל by "along" or "on" rather than "to." As the prophet had been led along or on the river's bank to see the increasing breadth and depth of the water, so was he now "caused to return" along or on the same bank to note the abundance of the foliage with which it was adorned.

Ver. 7.—Now when I had returned. בְּשׁוּבִי is by the best interpreters, after Gesenius ('Hebrew Grammar,' § 132. 2), regarded as an incorrect form for בְּשׁוּבִי (literally, *in my returning*), though Schröder adheres to the transitive sense of the verb, and translates, "when I had turned myself," and Hitzig takes the suffix י as a genitive of possession, and renders, "when he came back with me." In any case, on the return journey the prophet observed that at (or, *on*) the bank (or, *lip*) of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Hitzig supposes the trees had not been there when the prophet made the down journey, but sprang up when he had turned to his guide (ver. 6), and stood with his back to the river. Kliefoth's conclusion is better, that the trees had been there all the while, but that the prophet's attention had not been directed to them. The luxuriant foliage of this vision reappears in that of the Apocalyptic river (Rev. xxii. 2).

Ver. 8.—Toward the east country (אֶל־הַגְּלִילָה הַקַּדְמוֹנָה); literally, *the east circle*, in this case probably "the region about Jordan" (Josh. xxii. 10, 11), above the Dead Sea, where the valley or *ghôr* widens out into a broad basin, equivalent to כִּכַּר הַיַּרְדֵּן (Gen. xiii. 10). The LXX. render, εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν, designing by this, however (presumably), only to Græcize the Hebrew word גְּלִילָה, as they do with the term הָעֲרָבָה, desert, or, *plain*, which they translate by τὴν Ἀραβίαν. The Arabah signified the low, sterile valley into which the Jordan runs near Jericho, in which are the Dead Sea (hence called "the sea of the Arabah," Deut. iii. 17; iv. 49), and the brook Kedron, or "river of the Arabah" (Amos vi. 14), and which extends as far south as the head of the Elanitic gulf. The whole region is described by Robinson ('Bibl. Res.,' ii. 596) as one of extreme desolation—a character which belonged to it in ancient times (Josephus, 'Wars,' iii. 10. 7; iv. 8. 2). The part of this Arabah into which the waters flowed was situated north of the sea, clearly not the Mediterranean, but the Dead Sea, "the sea of the Arabah," as above stated, and the "eastern sea" as afterwards named (ver. 18), into which they ultimately flowed. The clause, which being brought forth into the sea, may either be connected with the preceding words or formed into an independent sentence. Among those who adopt the former construction a variety of renderings prevails. The LXX. reads, "(And the water) comes to the sea (ἐπὶ τὸ ὕδωρ τῆς διεκβολῆς), to the sea of the pouring out," *i.e.* the Dead Sea, into which the river debouches. With this Hävernick agrees, rendering, "to the sea of that outflow." Ewald reads, "into the sea of muddy waters," meaning the Dead Sea. Kimchi, "into the sea where the waters are brought forth," *i.e.* the ocean (the Mediterranean), whose waters go forth

to encompass the world. Hengstenberg, Kliefoth, Keil, and Currey, who adopt the latter construction, borrow בָּאוּ from the antecedent clause, and translate, "To the sea (come or go) the waters that have been brought forth," with which accords the Revised Version. The last words record the effect which should be produced by their entering into the sea. **The waters shall be healed,** *i.e.* rendered salubrious, from being hurtful (comp. Exod. xv. 23, 25; 2 Kings ii. 22). The translation of the LXX., ὑγιάσει τὰ ὕδατα, is inaccurate. The unwholesome character of the Dead Sea is described by Tacitus: "*Lacus immenso ambitu, specie maris sapore corruptior, gravitate odoris accolis pestifer, neque vento impellitur neque pisces aut suetas aquis volucres patitur*" ('Hist.,' v. 6). Von Raumer (p. 61) writes, "The sea is called Dead, because there is in it no green plant, no water-fowl in it, no fish, no shell. If the Jordan carry fish into it, they die." "According to the testimony of all antiquity and of most modern travellers," says Robinson ('Bibl. Res.,' ii. 226), "there exists within the waters of the Dead Sea no living thing, no trace, indeed, of animal or vegetable life. Our own experience goes to confirm the truth of this testimony. We perceived no sign of life within the waters."

Ver. 9.—The nature of the healing is next described as an impartation of such salubrity to the waters that **everything that liveth, which moveth**—better, *every living creature which swarmeth* (comp. Gen. i. 20, 21; vii. 21)—**whithersoever the rivers** (literally, *the two rivers*) **shall come, shall live.** The meaning cannot be that everything which liveth and swarmeth in the sea whither the rivers come shall live, because the Dead Sea contains no fish (see above), but whithersoever the rivers come, there living and swarming creatures of every kind shall spring into existence, shall come to life and flourish. The dual form, נַחֲלַיִם, has been accounted for by Maurer, as having been selected on account of its resemblance to מַיִם; by Hävernick and Currey, as pointing to the junction of another river, the Kedron (Hävernick), the Jordan (Currey), with the temple-stream before the latter, should fall into the sea; by Kliefoth, as alluding to a division of the river waters after entering the sea; by Neumann and Schröder, as referring to the waters of the sea and the waters of the river, which should henceforth be united; and by Hengstenberg, with whom Keil and Plumptre agree, as a dual of intensification (as in Jer. l. 21), signifying "double river," with allusion to its greatness, or the strength of its current. None of these interpretations is free from objection; though probably, in default of better, the last is best. Ewald changes the dual into נָחָל, a singular with a suffix, while Hitzig makes of it a plural; but neither of these devices is satisfactory. As a further evidence that the waters of the sea should be healed by the inflowing into them of the waters of the river, it is stated that the sea should thereafter contain **a very great multitude of fish** (literally, *and the fish will be very many*), **of** which previously it contained none. The **next** clauses supply the reason of this abundance of fish, **because** these waters (of the river) **shall**—or, *are* (Revised Version) **come thither**—(into the waters of the sea), for (literally, *and*) **they,** the latter, **shall be** (or, *are*) **healed, and everything shall live** (or, connecting this with the foregoing clause, *and everything shall be healed, and live*) **whithersoever the river cometh**—the river, namely, that proceedeth from the temple.

Ver. 10.—As another consequence of the inflowing of this river into the Dead Sea, it is stated that **the fishers** (rather, *fishers*, without the article) should stand upon its **banks, from Engedi, even unto Eneglaim; there shall be a place to spread forth nets.** The Revised Version more correctly renders, *fishers shall stand by it; from Engedi even unto Eneglaim, shall be a place for the spreading of nets;* or, more literally, *a place of spreading out for nets* (comp. ch. xxvi. 5). Engedi, עֵין גֶּדִי, meaning "Fountain of the kid," originally styled Hazezon-Tamar (2 Chron. xx. 2), now called *'Ain Jidy* (Robinson, 'Bibl. Res.,' ii. 214), was situated in the middle of the west coast of the Dead Sea, and not at its southern extremity, as Jerome supposed. Eneglaim, עֵין עֶגְלַיִם, signifying "Fountain of two calves," was located by Jerome, who calls it *En Gallim*, at the northern extremity of the Dead Sea, and is usually identified with the modern *'Ain Feshkhah*, or "Fountain of mist," at the northern end of the west coast, where the ruins of houses and a small tower have been discovered (Robinson, 'Bibl. Res.,' ii. 220). Ewald cites Isa. xv. 8 to show that Eneglaim was on the eastern shore of the Dead Sea, which, Smend notes, was given up by the prophet to the sons of the East.

Ver. 11.—**The miry places thereof** (בִּצְאֹתָו, an incorrect reading for בִּצּוֹחִיו, the plural with suffix of בִּצָּה, "a marsh, or swamp," as in Job viii. 11; xl. 21) **and the marshes thereof.** גַּבְאָיו, "its pools and sloughs" (comp. Isa. xxx. 14, where the term signifies a reservoir for water, or cistern), were the low tracts of land upon the borders of the Dead Sea, which in the rainy season, when its waters overflowed, became covered with pools (see Robinson, 'Bibl. Res.,' ii. 225).

These, according to the prophet, should not be healed (better than, "and that which shall not be healed," as in the margin of the Authorized Text), obviously because the waters of the temple-river should not reach them, but should be given to salt. When the waters of the above-mentioned pools have been dried up or evaporated, they leave behind them a deposit of salt (see Robinson, 'Bibl. Res.,' ii. 226), and Canon Driver ('Literature of the Old Testament,' p. 276), following Smend, conceives that the above-named miry places and marshes in the vicinity of the Dead Sea were to be allowed to remain as they were on account of the excellent salt which they furnished. (On the supposed (!) excellence of the salt derived from the Dead Sea, Thomson's 'Land and the Book,' p. 616, may be consulted.) If this, however, were the correct import of the prophet's words, then the clause would describe an additional blessing to be enjoyed by the land, viz. that the temple-river would not be permitted to spoil its "salt-pans;" but the manifest intention of the prophet was to indicate a limitation to the life-giving influence of the river, and to signify that places and persons unvisited by its healing stream would be abandoned to incurable destruction. "To give to salt" is in Scripture never expressive of blessing, but always of judgment (see Deut. xxix. 23; Judg. ix. 47; Ps. cvii. 34; Jer. xvii. 6; Zeph. ii. 9).

Ver. 12.—The effect of the river upon the vegetation growing on its banks is the last feature added to the prophet's picture. Already referred to in ver. 7, it is here developed at greater length. The "very many trees" of that verse become in this **all trees**, or every tree **for meat**, *i.e.* every sort of tree with edible fruit (comp. Lev. xix. 23), whose leaf should not fade or wither, and whose fruit should not be consumed or finished, *i.e.* should not fail, but continue to bring forth **new fruit**, *i.e.* early or firstfruits (Revised Version margin), **according to his** (or, *its*) **months**; or, *every month;* the ל in לְחֳדָשָׁיו being taken distributively, as in Isa. xlvii. 13 (compare לְיוֹם, "every day," in ch. xlvi. 13). This remarkable productivity, the prophet saw, was due, not so much to the fact that the tree roots sucked up moisture from the stream, as to the circumstance that the waters which they drank up **issued out of the sanctuary**. To the same circumstance were owing the nutritive and medicinal properties of their fruit and leaves respectively. The picture in this verse is unmistakably based on Gen. ii. 9, and is as clearly reproduced by the Apocalyptic seer in Rev. xxii. 2. On this whole vision the remarks of Thomson, in 'The Land and the Book' (pp. 660—663), are worthy of being consulted.

Vers. 13—23.—The boundaries of the land, and the manner of its division.

Ver. 13.—**Thus saith the Lord.** The usual formula introducing a new Divine enactment (comp. ch. xliii. 18; xliv. 9; xlv. 9, 18; xlvi. 1, 16). **This.** זֶה is obviously a copyist's error for וְזֶה, which the LXX., the Vulgate, and the Targum have substituted for it; the change seems demanded by the complete untranslatability of זֶה, and by the fact that וְזֶה גְּבוּל recurs in ver. 15. **The border, whereby ye shall inherit the land**; or, *divide the land for inheritance* (Revised Version). The term גְּבוּל, applied in ch. xliii. 13, 17 to the border of the altar, here signifies the boundary or limit of the land. (For the verb, comp. Numb. xxxii. 18; xxxiv. 13; Isa. xiv. 2.) **According to the twelve tribes.** This presupposed that at least representatives of the twelve tribes would return from exile; but it is doubtful if this can be proved from Scripture to have taken place, which once more shows that a literal interpretation of this temple-vision cannot be consistently carried through. Smend observes that the word commonly employed in the priest-code to denote "tribes" is מַטּוֹת (Numb. xxvi. 55; xxx. 1; xxxi. 4; xxxiii. 54; Josh. xiv. 1; xxi. 1; xxii. 14), which is never used by Ezekiel, who habitually selects, as here, the term שְׁבָטִים (ch. xxxvii. 19; xlv. 8; xlviii. 1), which also was not unknown to the priest-code (Exod. xxxix. 14; Numb. xviii. 2; Josh. xiii. 29; xxi. 16; xxii. 9, 10, 11, 13). That is to say, if the priest-code existed before Ezekiel, he had the choice of both terms, and selected *shebhet;* whereas if Ezekiel existed before the priest-code, and prepared the way for it, the author of the latter rejected Ezekiel's word *shebhet*, and adopted another perfectly unknown to the prophet. This fact appears to point to a dependence of Ezekiel on the priest-code rather than of the priest-code on Ezekiel. **Joseph** shall have two **portions**; rather, *Joseph portions*, as חֲלָקִים is not *dual*. Yet that two were intended is undoubted (see Gen. xlviii. 22; Josh. xvii. 14, 17).

Ver. 14.—**Ye shall inherit it, one as well as another**; literally, *a man as his brother*—the customary Hebrew phrase for "equally" (see, however, 2 Sam. xi. 25). The equal participants were to be tribes, not the families, as in the Mosaic distribution (Numb. xxxiii. 54). Had the earlier principle of allotment been indicated as that to be followed in the future, it would not have

been possible to give the tribes equal portions, as some tribes would certainly have a larger number of families than others. Nevertheless, the division was to be equal among the tribes, which shows it was rather of an ideal than of an actual distribution the prophet was speaking. Then what they should divide amongst themselves was to be the land concerning which Jehovah had **lifted up his hand**—a peculiarly Ezekelian phrase (see ch. xx. 5, 6, 15, 23, 28, 42), signifying "to swear" (comp. Gen. xiv. 22; Deut. xxxiii. 40)—to give it unto their fathers (see Gen. xii. 7; xviii. 8; xxvi. 3; xxviii. 13). That the land was not divided after this fashion among the tribes that returned from exile is one more attestation that the prophet's directions were not intended to be literally carried out.

Ver. 15.—*The north boundary.* **And this** shall be **the border of the land toward the north side.** The Revised Version follows Kliefoth and Keil in detaching the last clause from the preceding words, and reading. *This* shall be *the border of the land: on the north side.* **From the great sea,** the Mediterranean, by **the way of Hethlon, as men go to** (or, *unto the entering in of*) **Zedad.** The former of these places (*Chethlon*), which is again mentioned in ch. xlviii. 1, has not yet been identified, though Currey suggests for the "way," "the defile between the ranges of Lebanus and Antilibanus, from the sea to Hamath." The latter (Zedad) Wetstein and Robinson find in the city of Sadad (*Sudud*), east of the road leading from Damascus to Hums (Emesa), and therefore west of Hamath; but as Hamath in all probability lay to the east of Zedad, this opinion must be rejected.

Ver. 16.—The four names here mentioned belong to towns or places lying on the road to Zedad, and stretching from west to east. **Hamath,** called also Hamath the Great (Amos vi. 2), situated on the Orontes, north of Hermon and Antilibanus (Josh. xiii. 5; Judg. iii. 3), was the capital of a kingdom to which also belonged Riblah (2 Kings xxiii. 33). Originally colonized by the Canaanites (Gen. x. 18), it became in David's time a flourishing kingdom under Toi, who formed an alliance with the Hebrew sovereign against Hadadezer of Zoba (2 Sam. viii. 9; 1 Chron. xviii. 9). It was subsequently conquered by the King of Assyria (2 Kings xviii. 34). Winer thinks it never belonged to Israel; but Schürer cites 1 Kings ix. 19 and 2 Chron. viii. 3, 4 to show that at least in Solomon's reign it was temporarily annexed to the empire of David's son. In Ezekiel's chart the territory of united Israel should extend, not to the town of Hamath, but to the southern boundary of the land of Hamath. **Berothah** was probably the same as Berothai (2 Sam. viii. 8), afterwards called Chun (1 Chron. xviii. 8), if *Chun* is not a textual corruption. The town in question cannot be identified either with the modern *Beirut* on the Phœnician coast (Conder), since it must have lain west of Hamath, and therefore at a considerable distance from the sea; or with *Birtha*, the present day *El-Bir*, or *Birah*, on the east bank of the Euphrates, which is too far east; or with the Galilæan *Berotha*, near Kadesh (Josephus), as this is too far south; but must be sought for between Hamath and Damascus, and most likely close to the former. **Sibraim,** occurring here only, may, on the other hand, be assumed to have lain nearer Damascus, and may, perhaps, be identified with Ziphron (Numb. xxxiv. 9), though the site of this town cannot be where Wetstein placed it, at *Zifran*, north-east of Damascus, and on the road to Palmyra. Smend compares it with *Sepharvaim* (2 Kings xvii. 24). **Damascus** was the well-known capital of Syria (Isa. vii. 8), and the principal emporium of commerce between East and West Asia (ch. xxvii. 18). Its high antiquity is testified by both Scripture (Gen. xiv. 15; xv. 2) and the cuneiform inscriptions, in which it appears as *Dimaski* and *Dimaska* (Schrader, 'Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament,' p. 138). **Hazar-hatticon;** or, *the middle Hazar*, was probably so styled to distinguish it from Hazar-enan (ver. 17). (On the import of Hatticon, see Exod. xxvi. 28 and 2 Kings xx. 4, in both of which places it signifies "the middle.") The word Hazar (חָצֵר), "an enclosure," or "place fenced off," was employed to denote villages or townships, of which at least six are mentioned in Scripture (see Gesenius, 'Lexicon,' *sub voce*). **Hauran,** Αὐρανῖτις (LXX.), "Cave-land," so called because of the number of its caverns, was most likely designed to designate "the whole tract of land between Damascus and the country of Gilead" (Keil).

Ver. 17.—The northern boundary is further defined as extending **from the sea,** *i.e.* the Mediterranean on the west, to **Hazar-enan,** or the "Village of fountains," in the east, which village again is declared to have been the **border,** frontier city (Keil), at the border (Revised Version) of **Damascus,** and as having on the north northward the border or territory of Hamath. The final clause adds, **And this is the north side,** either understanding וְאֵת, with Gesenius, as equivalent to *αὐτός, ipse*, "this same," or with Hitzig and Smend, after the Syriac, substituting for it here and in vers. 18, 19 וּמִן as in ver. 20; though Hengstenberg and Keil prefer to regard אֵת as the customary sign of the accusative, and to supply some

such thought as "ye see" (Hengstenberg), or "ye shall measure" (Keil), which ver. 18 shows was in the prophet's mind. Compared with the ancient north boundary of Canaan (Numb. xxxiv. 7—9), this appointed by Ezekiel's Torah for the new land shows a marked correspondence.

Ver. 18.—*The east boundary.* **And the east side ye shall measure from Hauran,** etc. The Revised Version, after Keil and Kliefoth, translates, '*And the east side, between Hauran and Damascus and Gilead, and the land of Israel, shall be* (the) *Jordan; from the* (north) *border unto the east sea shall ye measure.* Smend offers as the correct rendering, *The east side goes from between Hauran and Damascus, and from between Gilead and the land of Israel, along the Jordan, from the border unto the east sea.* In any case, by this instruction, first the land of Israel was defined as the territory lying west of the Jordan, and secondly its boundary should extend from the last-named north border at its easternmost point, Hazar-enan, down the Jordan valley to the Dead Sea. The practical effect of this would be to cut off the lands which in the earlier division (Numb. xxxiv. 14, 15) had been assigned to Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. Otherwise the boundary here given corresponds with that traced in Numbers, though the latter is more minute. Hengstenberg, however, thinks the prophet cannot have intended to assert that the new Israel should not possess the land of Gilead as a frontier in the future as formerly, as in that case he would have been at variance, not only with pre-existing Scripture (comp. Ps. lx. 7; Micah vii. 14; Jer. l. 19; Zech. x 10), but with subsequent history.

Ver. 19.—*The south boundary.* This should begin where the east boundary terminated, viz. at **Tamar,** "Palm tree." Different from Hazezon-Tamar, or Engedi (ver. 10; 2 Chron. xx. 2), which lay too far up the west side of the sea, Tamar can hardly be identified either with the *Tamar* of 1 Kings ix. 18 near Tadmor in the wilderness, or with the *Thamara* (Θαμαρά) of Eusebius between Hebron and Elath, supposed by Robinson ('Bibl. Res.,' ii. 616, 622) to be *Kurnub,* six hours south of *Milh,* towards the pass of *Es-Sufah,* since this was too distant from the Dead Sea. The most plausible conjecture is that Tamar was "a village near the southern end of the Dead Sea" (Currey). Proceeding westward, the southern boundary should reach to the **waters of strife in Kadesh;** better, *to the waters of Meriboth Kadesh.* These were in the Desert of Sin, near Kadesh-Barnea (Numb. xx. 1—13), which, again, was on the road from Hebron to Egypt (Gen. xvi. 14). The exact site, however, of Kadesh-Barnea is matter of dispute; Rowland and Keil find it in the spring *'Ain Kades,* at the north-west corner of the mountain-land of Azazimeh, which stretches on the south of Palestine from the south-south-west to the north-north-east, and forms the watershed between the Mediterranean and the Arabah valley. Delitzsch and Conder seek it in the neighbourhood of the *Wady-el-Jemen,* on the south-east side of the above watershed, and on the road from Mount Hor. Robinson ('Bibl. Res.,' ii. 582) discovers it in *'Ain-el-Weibeh,* not far from Petra. A writer (Sm., Smend?) in Riehm ('Handwörterbuch des Biblischen Alterthums,' art. "Kades") pleads for a site on the west side of the Azazimeh plateau, and in the vicinity of the road by Shur to Egypt. Leaving Kadesh, the boundary should continue to **the river,** or, *brook,* i.e. of Egypt, and thence extend to **the great sea,** or Mediterranean. The punctuation of נַחֲלָה, which makes the word signify "lot," must be changed into נַחֲלָה, so as to mean "river," since the reference manifestly is to the torrent of Egypt, the *Wady-el-Arish,* on the borders of Palestine and Egypt, which enters the Mediterranean near Rhinocorura ('Ρινοκόρουρα). In Numb. xxxiv. 5 it is called the river of Egypt. **And this is the south side southward** (see on ver. 17). The correspondence between this line and that of the earlier chart (Numb. xxxiv. 4, 5) is once more apparent.

Ver. 20.—*The western boundary.* This, as in Numb. xxxiv. 6, should be **the great sea from the border,** *i.e.* the southern boundary last mentioned (ver. 19), **till a man come over against Hamath;** literally, *unto* (the place which is) *over against the coming to Hamath;* i.e. till opposite the point (on the coast) at which one enters the territory of Hamath (comp. Judg. xix. 10; xx. 43).

Vers. 21—23.—The geographical boundaries of the land having been indicated, general directions are furnished as to the manner of its distribution. (1) It should be partitioned among the tribes as tribes rather than among the families of Israel (see on ver. 13). (2) The division of the territory should be made by lot. This is pointed to by the use of חָלַק (from חֵלֶק, "a smooth stone"), which signifies "to divide by lot." (3) The strangers who should sojourn amongst the tribes and beget children amongst them should inherit equally with Israelites who should be born in the country. (4) The inheritance of the stranger should be assigned him in the tribe where he sojourned. Of these regulations the last two were an advance on the earlier Mosaic legislation with regard to "strangers," or גֵּרִים, who were to be treated with affectionate kindness

(Exod. xxii. 21; xxiii. 9; Lev. xix. 34; Deut. i. 16; xxiv. 14), admitted to offer sacrifice (Lev. xvii. 8, 10, 13), and even allowed to partake of the Passover on submitting to circumcision (Exod. xii. 48), but on no account permitted to hold property in land (Lev. xxv. 47—55). But if the priest-code was later than Ezekiel, why should it have receded from the freer and more liberal spirit of Ezekiel? If progressive development can determine the relative ages of two documents, then Ezekiel, which accords equal rights to Jew and Gentile in the new Israel, and thus anticipates that breaking down of the middle wall of partition which has taken place under the gospel (John x. 16; Rom. ii. 10, 11; ix. 24; Gal. iii. 8—14, 28; Eph. ii. 14—16), should be posterior to the priest-code, which shows itself to be not yet emancipated from the trammels of Jewish exclusivism. At the same time, Ezekiel's Torah does not grant equal rights with native-born Israelites to "strangers" indiscriminately, or only to those of them who should have families, as Hitzig suggests, in reward for their increasing the population, but to such of them as should permanently settle in the midst of Israel, and show this by begetting children, and in this manner "building houses" for themselves. Kliefoth justly cautions against concluding from the prophet's statement that the time in which the prophet's vision realizes itself will necessarily be one in which marrying and begetting children will take place; and with equal justice points out that the number of Israel, especially when swelled up by an influx of Gentiles, will be so great (comp. ver. 10) as to render their settlement within the narrow boundaries of the land an impossibility—in this circumstance finding another indication that the prophet's language was intended to be symbolically, not literally, interpreted.

NOTE.—*On the boundaries of the land.* Smend thinks (1) that in respect of the north boundary, Ezekiel and the priest-code contradict the older source of the Pentateuch, which does not permit the territory of Asher to extend so far north as Hamath (see Josh. xix. 24—31; and comp. Judg. i. 31); (2) that never at any time did Israelites dwell so far north as at the entering in of Hamath; (3) that this extension of the land northwards was intended as a compensation for the withdrawment of the territory east of the Jordan; and (4) that in dividing among tribes rather than among families Ezekiel deviates from both the Jehovistic tradition and the priest-code. But (1) if the above-cited passages do not extend Asher's territory beyond Tyre, Gen. xv. 18, which critics assign to the Elohist, one of the authors of J.E., the so-called *prophetical narrative of the Hexateuch*, and Exod. xxiii. 31, which, according to the same authorities, formed part of the commonly styled *book of the covenant*, expressly mention the great river Euphrates as the north boundary of the land, while the same is recognized by the Deuteronomist (xi. 24; xix. 8). (2) 1 Kings iv. 24; viii. 65; and 2 Kings xiv. 25 (comp. 2 Chron. vii. 8; viii. 3, 4) show that in the time of Solomon the boundaries of the land reached as far north as Hamath. (3) As it was not originally contemplated by the Mosaic distribution to take immediate possession of the east Jordan land (Numb. xxxiv. 10—12), and this was only granted to Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh on their entreaty (Numb. xxxii. 33—42), no ground existed why its withdrawal should be compensated for. (4) If Ezekiel's division of the land according to tribes rather than families shows that it existed prior to the priest-code, then the same argument should demonstrate its prior existence to J.E., which throughout assumes the principle of division according to families. (5) If Ezekiel preceded the priest-code, it will require some explanation to understand, first, why the author of the latter should have followed the comparatively uncertain Jehovistic tradition rather than the definite arrangements made by a prophet whom he regarded as practically the originator of his faith; and secondly, why he should have so materially altered that prophet's land-boundaries and tribe-dispositions.

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—5.—*The vision of the waters.* Hitherto most of Ezekiel's representations of the happy age of the restoration have been given in somewhat prosaic details which could be realized in actual facts. But now he returns to his figurative style, and sets

before us an imaginative picture of the glorious future. He passes from the regulations of the priesthood and the government to a description of a fountain of water issuing from the temple in the most natural way, as though all these things were equally sure to happen in the course of time. But the prophet can scarcely have been anticipating a repetition of Moses' miracle at the rock of Horeb, because his subsequent language would be absurd if we read it literally. It must be, therefore, that the prophecy is here symbolical. The blessings of the Messianic era are like waters flowing from under the threshold of the temple.

I. THE BLESSING OF THE WATERS. In a dry land streams of water are most highly valued. Their banks, fringed with green, tell a pleasing story of the life and fertility that they bring wherever they flow. The blessings of the gospel are like living waters. 1. *Cleansing.* God has opened a fountain for all uncleanness. 2. *Life.* Christ gives the water of life. Without his grace our souls are parched and perishing. 3. *Refreshment.* The water is continually flowing; it is no stagnant pool. The life which it first quickens is daily fed by its invigorating supplies. The good Shepherd leads his flock by the still waters for repeated cheering and refreshing. 4. *Beauty.* Where the water flows the land is green and fair. The beauty of holiness springs up by the channel of Christ's grace. 5. *Fruitfulness.* There grow by the water fruit-bearing trees. Christian fruitfulness springs from the ever fresh supplies of Christ's grace.

II. THE SOURCE OF THE WATERS. 1. *From God.* The stream issues from the temple where God visits the earth and has his typical dwelling. It is he who sends forth the life-giving flood. We have the gospel of the grace of God. From him, and him alone, comes our salvation. 2. *By sacrifice.* The stream is to flow from under the altar on which sacrifices are offered. God's grace is given to us in Christ, and by means of his great atoning sacrifice. Christ especially claimed to give living waters (John iv. 10). It is by his death that we live. From his cross the stream now flows for the healing of the nations. 3. *Through worship.* The temple had to be built, the altar set up, and the services duly conducted. We receive grace through faith when we yield our hearts and lives to Christ.

III. THE COURSE OF THE WATERS. 1. *Outflowing.* They rise in the temple; but they are not shut up in the sacred enclosure; they flow out for the good of the people. The gospel rose in Judaism, and passed out to the Gentile world. The grace of Christ is for the people generally, chiefly for those who thirst and faint for need of it. 2. *Increasing.* The small stream becomes a mighty river. "He giveth more grace." The blessings of Christ increase with time. The more we know of him, and the longer we follow him, the more of his grace flows to us. The gospel widens its area as it flows down the ages. The tiny stream, represented by the upper room at Jerusalem, becomes the mighty river of Christendom. As the area of influence widens, the grace of Christ comes in ever more and more abundant supplies, so that there is enough for all.

Vers. 8—11.—*Life and healing.* The stream that bursts from the temple rock is to flow through the dry ravines of the eastern wilderness until it reaches the Dead Sea, the desolate waters of which are to be miraculously healed by the coming of the life-bearing flood. Then fish shall swarm in the purified sea, "and everything shall live whither the river cometh." This is a parable of the course of the gospel of Christ.

I. THE GRACE OF CHRIST FLOWS TO THE MOST DEAD AND DEGRADED PEOPLE. The Dead Sea may be taken to represent the world in its sin, or that portion of mankind that is most sunken and worthless. The temple waters were not confined to the bracing heights of Jerusalem. They could not contain themselves in those upland regions. Their quantity was so great that they could not but overflow and pour themselves down through the wilderness. Christ cannot keep his rich gifts for a few rare, saintly souls already safely gathered into the Church. They are for the world, chiefly for the world in its sin and desolation. The gathering flood cannot rest till it finds the low level of the Dead Sea. Christ can have no satisfaction till his gospel has reached the most sinful and fallen creatures in the world.

II. THE GRACE OF CHRIST BRINGS PURIFICATION AND HEALING. 1. *Purification.* The Dead Sea is charged with salts; the stream is represented as washing these away, or in some manner transforming them. Some great cleansing is needed to purge the

earthy mixture out of the hearts and lives of man. Christ brings waters in which the foulest may wash and be clean. 2. *Healing.* The strong brine of the Dead Sea is fatal to all life. If fish come down in the Jordan they must perish as soon as they reach the fatal lake. To the bather the waters are so pungent that they produce agonizing sensations in the eyes, and the taste of them is unendurable. Enclosed by the bluest of hills, steaming with tropical heat, the dull and heavy waters produce a scene of noxious beauty—like the charm of the snake, like the fascination of sin. But the gospel brings healing to the poisoned sea of human life, as the temple flood was imagined to bring it to the Dead Sea.

III. THE PURIFICATION AND HEALING OF THE GRACE OF CHRIST BEAR FRUIT IN LIFE. The purged sea is to team with fish, and fishermen are to spread their nets on its now neglected shores. Before Christ comes men are dead in trespasses and sins. He brings life for the dead, and wherever his gospel goes it introduces this life to the world. Even intellectual, social, and political life are energized by Christianity. The strongest, keenest, freshest life of the world is found in Christendom. Those lands which were once Christian, and have since lost the religion of the Christ, have sunk back to semi-barbarism; *e.g.* North Africa. The best nourishment for the highest life of man in all its branches is found in the New Testament. When Christ is received, life is strong, rich, and fruitful.

Ver. 12.—*Trees of life.* I. THE SITE ON WHICH THEY GROW. "By the river upon the bank, on this side and on that side." All the blessings of Christianity are drawn from its central stream in the grace of Christ. But that stream fertilizes its banks, like the Nile, and many trees overshadow its waters. As the dry *wady* is pleasantly broken by a thread of green just where the watercourse winds through it, so the dreary and spiritually fruitless waste of the sin-stricken world has the cheering presence in its midst of Christianity and the fruits of the love and work of Christ. We must be near the stream if we would reach the trees, and we must be near Christ if we would enjoy his blessing. The closer the trees stand to the refreshing flood the more freely will they grow and flourish, and the closer all our Christian work and various institutions are to Christ the better will they thrive.

II. THE NUMBER AND VARIETY OF THEM. "All trees for meat," etc. 1. They are *numerous.* Many Christian agencies cluster about the gospel of Christ. There is abundance of life and energy here. However many may seek for grace from Christ, there is enough for all. 2. They are of *various kinds.* Thus they are suited to different orders of minds, to different circumstances and needs, and to different good ends. There is a rich variety in the blessings of the gospel, like the variety of nature, in which many kinds and species contribute to the general well-being of the whole.

III. THEIR PERENNIAL FRESHNESS. 1. They are *evergreen.* Most earthly comforts fade and pass away in course of time. Human good things are subject to shifting seasons. The fickle, changeful, transient character of the comforts of this world should drive us to the everlasting refuge of the Rock of Ages and the never-fading freshness of the trees of life. God's grace never fails. The blessings that spring from Christianity are independent of the fluctuations of outward life. It is possible to enjoy the green leaf in the garden of the Lord when all around is bare and desolate in wintry death. 2. Their fruit comes *continuously.* "It shall bring forth new fruit every month." (1) The fruit-season in the kingdom of heaven is all the year round. Here we are often made to distinguish between the time of seed-sowing—which may be one of tears—and that of the joyous harvest. It is not so with the heavenly trees of life. They bear fruit in "the winter of our discontent." There is never a time when we may not seek and find some comfort and satisfaction in Christ. (2) These blessings come again and again as fresh gifts from God: "*New* fruit." We are not to be satisfied with the grace of the past; grace comes anew to God's people.

IV. THE GREAT SERVICE THEY RENDER. 1. *They supply food.* "The fruit thereof shall be for meat." Thus God nourishes the interior life of his people with heavenly fruit. Excluded from the earthly Eden, they can eat of the better fruit of the unseen and spiritual paradise. Souls live on Christ, the heavenly Manna. His flesh is meat indeed. 2. *They give medicine.* "And the leaf thereof for medicine." We need spiritual healing as well as feeding—healing from the bite of the serpent sin, from the

crushing blow of adversity, from all that makes heart and soul sick. This too is provided in the grace of Christ the "good Physician." Balm of Gilead may fail us, but the Divine Herbalist has decoctions from the leaves of the tree of life that cure all soul ailments.

Ver. 13.—*Joseph's double portion.* When the land was divided the tribes did not all share alike. Some had larger territories than others, and the descendants of Joseph had two tribal portions, being divided into two tribes—Ephraim and Manasseh.

I. THE BLESSINGS OF THE FATHER DESCEND TO THE CHILDREN. Joseph had proved himself the best as well as the greatest of the sons of Jacob. He had returned good for evil to his cruel, murderous brothers, and had been the means of bringing blessing to all his father's household. He was now blessed in the blessing of his children. There is no better way of rewarding good parents than by prospering their children. We may see God's favour descending in line from generation to generation of them that fear him.

II. JUSTICE IS NOT THE SAME AS EQUALITY. It might seem to be unjust to the rest of the tribes that Joseph's descendants should be reckoned as two tribes. But it is not always right and fair to give exactly the same to every one. Equal partition may mean great wrong. Justice takes account of *merit;* some deserve more than others. It takes note of *need;* some require more than others. It has reference to *capacity;* some can use more than others. It is not just to reward the faithless as much as the faithful servant, nor to give to the giant as small a meal as to the dwarf, nor to entrust to the man of small mind as much responsibility as to one of large powers. Joseph's tribes may have deserved, have needed, or have been capable of using, more territory than any of the other tribes. They were more numerous in population.

III. THERE IS NO INJUSTICE WHERE NO ONE IS WRONGED. Provision was made for the double share of Joseph by giving to one of his tribes the portion that would have fallen to the lot of Levi, who was provided for out of the sacrificial offerings and the sacred cities whose inheritance was the Lord. Thus when it is granted that sacrifices should be made and tithes paid for religious purposes, we may conclude that there was a portion to spare. The ten tribes were not robbed to give to Ephraim or Manasseh, No injustice was done to those labourers of our Lord's parable who had toiled all day when the eleventh-hour labourers received equal wages; for the former had had full pay, all they had agreed for, and the heavier rate of the payment given to the latter was dependent only on the generosity of the master, who, having satisfied all due claims, had a right to do as he would with his own (Matt. xx. 15). Angels have no right to envy God's grace to men, for angels have their due. We have no right to begrudge to any people whatever favour God may show them. He does not rob us.

IV. GOD PROVIDES FOR INDIVIDUALS, AND NOT MERELY FOR COMMUNITIES. Ephraim and Manasseh, the two tribes of Joseph, were equal in population to the other tribes, if not more numerous. Therefore, the individual members of these two tribes received no more than their brethren in other tribes. Caring for man and not for communities, God was fair in giving most land to the most populous branch of the family of Jacob. His blessings now are for separate souls.

V. GREAT TRUSTS BRING GREAT RESPONSIBILITIES. The man of five talents does his duty in getting five more, while he of two talents does his equally in getting but two more. With double territory the two tribes of Joseph were expected to furnish a proportionately large supply of men for the national defence. Much is expected of those to whom much has been given. Specially privileged Christian people may rest assured that specially important duties have been laid upon them.

Ver. 21.—*The division of the land.* I. THE DIVISION WAS INTO SEPARATE ALLOTMENTS. The land of Israel was not held in common by the whole people. Certain dues were attached to it, and certain regulations governed the treatment of it by its owners. Thus it was forbidden for any one to make an absolute sale of his estate. On these conditions each family held its own land, like the peasant-proprietors of France and Belgium. God divides our lives out severally. Each must live his own separate life and discharge his individual duty while he receives his personal grace. We are to live in the community and for its benefit, bearing one another's burdens and so fulfilling the law

of Christ, but still each taking his own particular part in the common life of the whole.

II. THE DIVISION WAS CLEAR AND DEFINITE. There were exact confines, and it was a criminal offence for any one to remove his neighbour's landmark (Deut. xix. 14). We ought to have no doubt as to our portion in life. Occasionally we may see a desolate, ruinous house—part of an estate in chancery, the ownership of which is disputed; on the other hand, we hear of claimants to estates who find it difficult to obtain what they urge is their own property. But in the region of personal religion each should see what is his portion and mission for the world.

III. THE DIVISION INCLUDED A PORTION FOR EVERY ISRAELITE. It was so carefully made that the most insignificant family should not be overlooked. There should be a share for every one in the produce of our great fruitful earth. Centres of population may be overcrowded, but the earth is not yet full. Folly and sin, tyranny, injustice, and robbery, keep many out of their rights. If all did their duty and had their dues there would be enough for all. This holds good also in the spiritual world. There is room in the kingdom of heaven for all. No one need fear that others will go in first and take the blessing, and so leave him behind too late to get any benefit from the Divine bounty—like the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda (John v. 7). There is a portion in Christ's redemption for every soul of man. It only remains for all to receive their inheritance, accepting it by faith and entering it with obedience to the Lord who is supreme over the whole.

IV. THE DIVISION WAS BY LOT. This expedient prevented all complaints of supposed injustice. The owner of a bit of bare hillside had no right to envy the fortunate possessor of a rich plot in the valley. But there was more than this object in view in the use of the lot, which was taken as part of the method of Divine government. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. xvi. 33). The people were thus to feel that God was to determine where each should settle, and to say, "He shall choose our inheritance for us" (Ps. xlvii. 4). We talk of the "lottery of life," but we should remember that Providence obliterates chance. God orders our circumstances, and whether the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places and we have a goodly heritage, or we are left to poverty and hardship, our Father's choice must be good.

Vers. 22, 23.—*The stranger's portion.* We do wrong to the ancient Jewish Law and to the character of the Jews themselves when we regard a selfish exclusiveness as the marked feature of Old Testament times. A certain separateness was required to keep the people of God from the idolatry and immorality of their heathen neighbours, and none of the privileges of Israel could be enjoyed excepting on condition of entering into the covenant of Israel—the covenant which needed to be accepted and kept by the chosen people themselves in order that they might enjoy their privileges. But the bitter jealousy which was seen in the narrow Judaism of New Testament times is not encouraged by the Law, nor does it seem to have been indulged in by the Old Testament Israelites. It was the revenge of a persecuted sect turned against their powerful oppressors. A freer, happier, more generous spirit prevailed in the earlier Hebrew nation. The people were taught to cultivate national hospitality. Care for the stranger was repeatedly inculcated in their Law. Much more is it incumbent on Christians to manifest a brotherly spirit in welcoming strangers.

I. STRANGERS SHOULD RECEIVE A BROTHERLY WELCOME FROM CHRISTIAN PEOPLE. Hospitality is an Eastern habit; it should be a Christian grace. 1. *In the church.* Care should be taken to make strangers feel at home in our midst. The least aversion to having a stranger sitting by one's side may check the beginning of a new course of life by repelling the seeker after truth from the means of enlightenment. The friendless, the poor, the timid, the penitent, should be received with especial kindness. 2. *In the home.* Christian people have not sufficiently regarded their Lord's command to make guests of the poor who can offer no return (Luke xiv. 13). 3. *In the world.* A generous Christian spirit should open the heart to receive strangers. The miserably selfish isolation in which some people immure themselves is quite alien to the brotherly spirit of Jesus Christ.

II. STRANGERS ARE WELCOMED BY CHRIST INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. 1.

Gentiles. Assuredly Christianity is not narrower than Judaism, under which even provision was made for a brotherly reception of proselytes. They who were strangers to the covenant of promise are now brought nigh by the blood of Christ. The wild olive branch is grafted in to the fruitful stock (Rom. xi. 17). Gentiles are freely admitted to the promised blessings of Abraham. 2. *Heathen.* Strangers to Christendom are invited into the kingdom of Christ. The heathen world is to receive the gospel. From China, from New Guinea, from Central Africa, the strangers press into the privileged kingdom. 3. *Sinners.* We have not to go to a distant continent to discover strangers to Christ. They may be found in a Christian land—even in a Christian Church! Every man who lives in sin is a stranger to Christ. But all sinners are invited to the Saviour.

III. STRANGERS MUST BECOME TRUE CITIZENS IN ORDER TO ENJOY THE PRIVILEGES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. The stranger needed to adopt the Law, to be circumcised, and to become a Jew, if he was to have his portion in the land. People who are spiritually strangers now need a circumcision of heart (Deut. xxx. 6) and a new birth to have the blessings of Christ. All may have the Christian blessedness, but all must first become Christians. There is a portion for every one in Christ's kingdom; it now only rests with every one to qualify himself for his inheritance by penitence and faith in Jesus Christ.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—12.—*The holy waters.* The beauty and even sublimity of this portion of Ezekiel's prophecies must impress every reader of imagination and taste. Upon the suggestion of the waters of Siloam taking their rise from the temple rock, and the watercourse of the Kedron threading its way among the rocky deserts until it reaches the expanse of the Dead Sea, the poet-prophet describes a river which has its source in the sanctuary of Jehovah, and which broadens and deepens as it flows, until it becomes a stream of vastest blessing, diffusing health and life for the benefit of multitudes of men. Under this similitude Ezekiel pictures the spiritual blessings brought by God, through the channels of his grace and faithfulness, not to Israel alone, but to all mankind.

I. THE SOURCE OF THE HOLY WATERS. As the rain comes down from heaven, filters in the soil, and wells up a living spring, so the blessings of the gospel have their fountain in the very mind and heart of God himself. But, as conveyed to men, they have a well-spring human and earthly. The student of human history, who looks beneath the surface of things, and seeks to understand the growth of thought and of morals, turns his attention to the Hebrew people, wondering that from them, as from a well-head of ethical and religious life, should flow blessings so priceless for the enrichment of humanity. Yet so it is; the temple at Jerusalem is the symbol of a Divine revelation. The justest and noblest ideas which have entered into the intellectual and spiritual life of man have very largely issued from Moses and the Hebrew prophets. How far Ezekiel entered into this truth may not be certain; yet since he was a cosmopolite, in relation with Babylon, Egypt, and Tyre, and knew well the mental and moral state of the nations of antiquity, it seems reasonable to believe that he had enough of the critical spirit to compare the debt of the world to the Hebrews as compared with the people that figure so vastly in secular history. He was certainly right in tracing to Israelitish sources the waters of life, fruitfulness, and healing which were to bring blessing to mankind.

II. THE WIDENING AND DEEPENING OF THE HOLY WATERS. It is here that Ezekiel passes from history to prophecy. Possessed by the Spirit of God, he was able to look into the future and behold the wonder yet to be. It is, indeed, marvellous that, in a period of national depression, when national extinction seemed to human foresight to be imminent, the prophet of the exile should have had so clear a perception of the reality of things, and so clear a foresight of the spiritual future of the world, which must in his apprehension have appeared bound up with the continuity of the history and religious life of Israel. The river, like the temple from which it proceeded, was the emblem of what was greater than itself. Christian commentators have taken pleasure in tracing correspondences between the gradual increase of the stream and the

growth of true and spiritual religion. Beginning with Judaism, the stream of truth and blessing widened and deepened into Christianity; and Christianity itself, commencing its course in the bosom of Israel, soon came to include in its ever-widening flood, its ever-deepening volume of blessing, all the nations comprehended in the dominion of Rome. And following centuries have witnessed the constant broadening of the life-giving and beneficent stream, so that none can place a limit to the area which shall be fertilized and refreshed by the waters that first flowed from the courts of the temple at Jerusalem.

III. THE BENEFICENCE OF THE HOLY WATERS. Among the results of the presence of the waters of life may be observed the following. 1. *Healing.* The salt and bituminous waters of the Dead Sea are represented as being healed and restored to sweetness by this inflow of the sweet and wholesome waters issuing from the sanctuary. By this may be understood the power of pure and supernatural religion to heal the corruptions of sinful society. Certainly, as a matter of fact, not a little has been done in this direction in the course of the centuries, as the Church has taken possession, first of the Roman empire, and then of the nations of the North, and as, in these latter days, it has, with missionary zeal, penetrated the foulness of the remotest heathenism. 2. *Life.* And this in two several directions. The prophet saw very many trees on the banks of the river, and a very great multitude of fish in its translucent waters. Life, both vegetable and animal, life of every kind and order, is the result of the stream's full and beneficent flow. Corresponding with this is the spiritual life which results from the benign and wholesome influence of true Christianity. The Lord Jesus came that men might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. Life of the spirit, the very life of God himself—such is the issue of the Divine interposition and provision. 3. *Fruitfulness and abundance.* The fishers spread their nets and draw up from the waters a great supply of fish; the husbandmen go forth into the gardens and vineyards by the river-side and gather great crops of fruit. The river of the water of life, like the streams of Damascus creating a green oasis in the Syrian desert, brings fertility, a wealth of blossom and of fruit, wherever it flows. Righteousness and holiness, patience and peace, devotion and hope,—such are the harvest for which the world is indebted to the sweet waters of the Divine sanctuary.—T.

Ver. 12.—*The tree of life.* The river, which in his prophetic vision Ezekiel beholds, as it pursues its widening course from the temple rock eastwards towards the Arabab, is seen by him to be bordered with trees, clad with perennial foliage, and laden with luscious and nutritious fruits. And as the waters of life bring satisfaction and refreshment to the thirsting spirits of men, so do the trees supply them with leaves to heal their wounds and sicknesses, and with fruit to satisfy the hunger which the Dead Sea apples can only mock and leave unappeased.

I. THE SOURCE OF SALVATION. The fruitfulness of the trees which border the river-banks is accounted for by the fresh and flowing waters which keep their roots for ever moist and nourished. The gospel is a Divine provision for human need; its suitableness and sufficiency are only to be explained by its heavenly origin in the infinite wisdom and the infinite love of God himself. Our Saviour Christ, "for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven." The Holy Spirit who enlightens, quickens, and blesses, is the Gift of God, "proceeding from the Father and the Son."

II. THE CHARACTER OF SALVATION. As represented in this exquisitely beautiful figure, salvation is twofold. 1. It includes healing for sin. As the leaves of certain trees were and are applied to the body for the healing of wounds and diseases, so the gospel brings to sinful men the Divine remedy and cure. 2. It includes the supply of spiritual wants. It is an imperfect view of religion which confines it to a provision for pardon. Religion takes possession of the whole nature, and provides truth for the understanding, love for the heart, and power for the life. It is to the spiritual nature what food is to the body—sustenance, stimulus, and strength. As the strong man eats in order that he may be in health and vigorous life, in order that he may do his daily work, so does the good man partake of the fruit of God's Word in order that he may be empowered to render true and effective service to his God.

III. THE ABUNDANCE OF SALVATION. The trees which grew by the river of life are represented as characterized by unwithering leaf and by unfailing fruit. 1. Salvation

is afforded as God's gift to innumerable applicants of every variety of character and from every land. 2. Salvation is provided for successive generations. There was a marvellous largeness of view in the Prophet Ezekiel; he contemplated not only the many nations of men, but the successive inhabitants of the earth, as benefited by the provision of Divine mercy. The perennial and inexhaustible trees of life afford to all mankind in every age the healing and the sustenance which they require. There is no limit to God's bounty, as there is no limit to man's need.—T.

Vers. 13—21.—*The inheritance of the children.* The prophet was looking forward to the restoration of his fellow-countrymen to the land given by God to their fathers. The temple and all that concerns its services and ministrations having been described, Ezekiel naturally turns in the next place to picture the repossessed and apportioned inheritances. There are difficulties in interpreting this passage relating to the territories given to the several tribes; but there can be no doubt that the prophet foretold the renewed occupation of the soil by the descendants of Abraham. It seems probable that all the while Ezekiel had in his mind the spiritual Israel of which the chosen people were the type. There is an inheritance for the whole Israel of God.

I. A DIVINELY APPOINTED INHERITANCE. Whatever are the possessions and privileges of God's people, this is certain, that they are the gift of God's goodness. What have we that we did not receive? All things are of God. If we as Christians have entered upon a heritage of knowledge, of liberty, of purity, of peace, this is because the Lord has dealt bountifully with us.

II. AN ESPECIAL INHERITANCE FOR EACH. In the settlement of the tribes in the Holy Land nothing was left to accident or to ambition; the lot of each tribe was marked out by Divine appointment. All Christians may appropriate the language of the psalmist, "The lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." To one the great Head of the Church assigns an inheritance of conflict; to another, an inheritance of peace. One section of the Church is distinguished for its thinkers; another, for its workers. But each has his own ministry and responsibility, and it becomes each to be content and to refrain from envying the lot of another.

III. A SUFFICIENT INHERITANCE FOR ALL. Palestine, though comparatively a small country, was large enough to contain all the tribes. In the Church of Christ there is abundant accommodation and provision for all the members of that Church. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." There is no limitation to the Divine resources or to the Divine liberality.

IV. A PERPETUAL INHERITANCE. Israel retained possession of the land of promise for generations, for centuries; but that possession, nevertheless, came to an end. In this respect, there is a contrast between the temporal and the spiritual inheritance. None of God's people can ever be dispossessed from God's favour, or deprived of the privileges which are secured to them by the faithful promises of God. Those promises have respect, not to time only, but to eternity. Theirs is an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."—T.

Vers. 22, 23.—*The inheritance of the strangers.* It was certainly a provision of remarkable interest and liberality that is recorded in these verses. Considering the exclusive and clannish spirit which so largely distinguished the Hebrew people, we cannot but read with wonder as well as with gratification that aliens were permitted to partake with them the possession and enjoyment of the land of promise. Those of other blood, but of the same religion, who during the Captivity had cultivated the soil, were to be suffered to retain their inheritance equally with the returning exiles. Probably there was abundant room for all, for the numbers of the Israelites may well have been diminished during their exile. Strangers thus coalesced with the sons of Israel in the several tribes that went to make up the nation. In the same manner, upon a larger scale, an amalgamation of Jews and Gentiles took place in the constitution of the Israel of God—the Church of Christ.

I. THE EQUAL INHERITANCE OF ALL CHRIST'S PEOPLE IN CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGES IS NOT OWING TO NATURE, BUT IS THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE GRACE OF GOD.

II. THE EQUAL INHERITANCE INVOLVES A SIMILAR SPIRITUAL PREPARATION AND ADAPTATION.

III. THE EQUAL INHERITANCE ENTITLES ALL THE MEMBERS OF CHRIST'S CHURCH TO EQUAL PRIVILEGES.

APPLICATION. 1. All distinctions of an hereditary, secular, and educational character are of little importance in the Christian community. Boasting is excluded where all is of grace, and where none has any claim of right. 2. Mutual consideration and forbearance should obtain within the boundaries of the Church. Every Christian has some especial office and gift; perhaps every Christian has some special infirmity and imperfection. 3. It is profitable and delightful to look forward to the perfect fulfilment of the Saviour's purpose and prayer, to anticipate the time when all shall be one—one flock under one Shepherd. The inheritance of all God's people is known only by the common designation: "the inheritance of the saints in light."—T.

Vers. 1—12.—*The river of salvation.* The prophet has advanced from step to step in his outline sketch of Israel's destined glory. The temple is now complete. The throne is to be erected on a foundation of righteousness. The better order for sacrificial worship is instituted. The climax of blessing is almost reached. One great defect had been manifest in Israel's past history. They lived for themselves. They were the exclusive favourites of Jehovah. This defect shall be remedied. Israel shall henceforth be a blessing to the world. From under the temple altar a stream of life is seen to flow, which deepens as it flows, and which shall irrigate and vitalize whatever is barren in the land. From Israel, as from a centre, gracious power shall go forth to penetrate with new life the human race. Such is the significance of the vision. Yet this structure of future hope rests upon a groundwork of fact. Within recent years it has been discovered that immense reservoirs of water exist under the identical spot where once the altar stood. Ezekiel borrowed the material of his vision from the physical features of the temple area, and from the formation of the country lying to the east. By a geographical necessity, this stream flowed (in Ezekiel's day) down the valley of Jehoshaphat, along the valley of the Kedron, through land blasted with desolation, and found its way into the Dead Sea. With this raw material of fact the prophet weaves a gorgeous tapestry of prophecy. He foresees the glorious reality of Messiah's day. He limns in outline the magnificent results of Calvary. Pentecost, with its far-reaching consequences, was filling his heart with joy: hence he describes in glowing colours man's regenerated state through the abounding grace of God.

I. MARK THE SOURCE OF THIS LIFE-GIVING STREAM. "Behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward . . . the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar." Here we have an early unfolding of God's great plan of salvation—an anticipation of the closing vision in John's Apocalypse. There is vital instruction in every line. The stream had its rise under the altar, which altar is the emblem of the Saviour's cross. Hence we learn that the stream of Divine mercy, the river of life to men, has its source in suffering and sacrifice and death. Atoning death, the outburst of pent-up love, is the spring of life to the world. Such was the spectacle to the prophet's eye; this was revelation enough for the moment; yet there was a gracious fact further back. The real, invisible source of this salvation is in the heart of infinite love; but for wisest reasons the stream flows through the channel of the cross. Therefore, to the eye of man the most fitting spot whence this stream should seem to rise is the altar in the temple, where for ages God had been sought and his mercy had been found. The plural word "waters" signifies "abundance." They gushed forth in copious plentifulness. The impression made upon the mind was the very opposite to stint or reluctance. It was a generous overflow, a glad relief from previous restraint. Such is the quality of God's mercy to men. It leaps forth in generous abundance. There is no limit to his kindness. His love is equal to men's largest needs—equal to the salvation of the race. If God is the purveyor, there can be no lack. He gives with the heart of a Father and with the freeness of a King.

II. MARK THE RAPID GROWTH OF THE STREAM. At the distance of a thousand cubits from its source the waters reached only to a man's ankles. Another like distance was measured, now they reached the knees; and soon the stream was a river to swim in—a river that could not be forded. Impressive picture this of the development of God's plan of redemption! In Eden there was only an obscure promise. Down to

the days of Abraham the rill of experienced mercy reached only to the ankles. But it steadily grew in depth and fulness. It would be a waste of blessing if God should disclose his grace faster than man has capacity to receive. In Paul's day the stream had swelled in volume, so that, having tried his sounding-line, he stood confounded, and could only exclaim, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Still the stream rolls on and increases in magnitude. At its banks every thirsty soul may drink and live. For six thousand years it has been flowing, and, instead of giving any sign of diminution, the volume still increases and shall increase. For this saving knowledge shall cover the earth as the natural water fills the caverns of ocean. So important did God conceive it to be that Ezekiel should know of this steady increase, that he caused him to test it by personal experiment. It did not suffice that Ezekiel looked upon this increasing volume with his eye; he must go into it, and have deepest knowledge of the fact. They who preach to others must have personal experience of the truth. Theory and tradition and speculation will not suffice for the instruction of men. The preacher sent from God must declare what he has "tasted and handled and felt of the good word of life." Attention is summoned: "Son of man, hast thou seen this?"

III. MARK THE SALUTARY EFFECTS OF THIS STREAM. "Everything shall live whither the river cometh." The prophet soon left the region of natural fact. There *was* then a stream flowing out from under the temple; but its waters were not sweet; it did not grow in bulk as it proceeded; it did not bring fertility and life to the district. The country through which the Kedron flows is the most rocky and desolate to be found in Palestine. Although this little stream has been flowing for ages into the Dead Sea, it has not perceptibly alleviated its bitterness. Nauseous and pungent to the taste as ever is that water. Though beautiful to the eye as the Sea of Galilee, no animated life is on its shores; all verdure is wanting; and not the tiniest animalcula can live in its depths. It is the scene of silence and desolation. Pathetic emblem this of man's moral barrenness! 1. *Food* is provided. To this natural spectacle what a contrast does Ezekiel's picture present! This copious stream brings life and beauty to both its banks. Here grows every tree that can yield fruit. Here no scarcity can be found, for the trees bear in constant succession. As soon as one sort of fruit is exhausted another is purple with ripeness. No winter is here; it is perpetual summer. Such fruits may be enumerated: (1) knowledge; (2) repentance; (3) pardon; (4) peace; (5) obedience; (6) adoption; (7) Divine communion; (8) strength; (9) purity; (10) patience; (11) hope; (12) immortality. Already the deserts of earth have blossomed; already these fruits of Paradise have been tasted. For long years the prophecy has ripened into fact. 2. *Medicine.* "The leaf thereof shall be for medicine." The provision which God makes is always complete. Man is not only the subject of hunger, he is a victim of disease. He is racked with pain, torn with sorrows, tormented with a thousand cares. And as in nature the leaves and cells of plants contain medicine for every bodily disease; so in his kingdom of grace God has furnished remedies for all care and sorrow. "The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." And what else can these leaves be except the truths and promises of the gospel of Christ? Is it not a fact well attested that these words and pledges of Jehovah have alleviated the distress of many an anguished soul? acted as cooling balm to many a fevered heart? How many men, fettered with chains of despair, have broken them by virtue of the promise, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out"! How many no tongue can tell. And like healing medicine to a thousand afflicted souls has been the whispered assurance, "I will never leave thee;" and *this*, "My grace is sufficient for thee." "He has sent forth his word and healed them." 3. *There is perpetual verdure.* Of these trees "the leaf shall not fade." As a willow planted by the river-side is well-nigh always verdant, so the trees of righteousness were beauteous in immortal verdure because their roots were nourished by the river of God. Human nature (unvisited by God's grace) is a desert more bald and sterile than the hill-country of Judæa. But wherever this crystal stream of mercy comes, life—luxuriant, joyous life—appears. The plants of holiness flourish—"trees of the Lord, full of sap." A thousand such deserts have already blossomed, and the prophecy is undergoing fulfilment before our eyes. 4. *Abundant life is yet another effect.* "There shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither." It is in keeping with the

allegory that the prophet should speak only of fish as the kind of life generated by this stream. Yet as the result of this human life was sustained. Population increased, for men found useful occupation. The whole circumference of the Dead Sea became a scene of activity—the home of industry and plenty. Again we have a graphic sketch of the life-giving grace of our God. Wherever it has penetrated it has been life from the dead. Bodily life has been valued and prolonged. The curative art has developed. Domestic life has been enriched. All forms of intellectual life have unfolded. National life has been purified and organized. Population has grown. Best of all, the spiritual life in man has been awakened, and practical love to the human race has flourished. A moral revolution among mankind is in progress. The regeneration of society is proceeding. 5. *Exceptional barrenness is incurable.* "But the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt." There is a certain physical condition of barren land which no abundance of water will fertilize. So in the kingdom of grace resistance of Divine influence is possible. Among the chosen twelve there was a Judas. In the first Church avarice and hypocrisy wrought havoc of death. Some always "resist the Holy Ghost." Some "count themselves unworthy of everlasting life." To some in his day Jesus spake with pathetic sorrow, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."—D.

Vers. 13, 14, 22, 23.—*Canaan a type of heaven.* To the Jews exiled in Chaldea restoration to Palestine seemed a lesser heaven. To regain their land, their ancestral estates, their temple, their priesthood, was the goal of present ambition, was a stepping-stone to yet higher good. The prophetic pictures of Ezekiel were designed to tempt their thoughts to loftier soarings. A better thing than Canaan was in store for them, but as yet they could not appreciate it, therefore could not perceive it. So, by slow and patient steps, God leads us upward. We know but little as yet, realize little as yet, of our great inheritance. The soul is under bondage to the flesh. The eye is veiled with material things.

I. HEAVEN IS ASSIGNED AS THE INHERITANCE OF THE TRUE ISRAEL. It is an undoubted fact that the natural Israel is the type of the faithful in every land. It is a fact that the earthly Canaan is described in the New Testament as the type of the heavenly. "If we are Christ's, then are we Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." "We are come," says St. Paul, "to the heavenly Jerusalem." To the eye of the exiled John the architecture of the heavenly city was formed of materials borrowed from the earthly Jerusalem. Hence we still "seek a country, that is, a heavenly." It is provided for us by God; it is in course of preparation for our use. His house must be furnished with guests, and the guests are being prepared for the place. "The redeemed shall dwell there." "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell among them." "He is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has provided for them a city."

II. THIS INHERITANCE GOD HAS SECURED BY OATH UNTO ALL THE HEIRS. The title-deed is signed and sealed. It is writ in lines of blood—the blood of Christ.

"Signed when our Redeemer died,
Sealed when he was glorified."

To all other guarantees God has added this, viz. his solemn oath. "Concerning the which I lifted up mine hand to give it." As men will accept transference of property and testimony in general, done under the sanction of an oath, when they would not accept it as final and unalterable without the oath, so God has condescended to our infirmities—condescends to act according to human customs. A single promise from him suffices; a single word is enough. When he created, a word was ample: "He *spake*, and it was done." He said, "Let light be! and light was!" So, in securing to us the inheritance of heaven, a word from him is full security. His promise is as good as his performance. Yet he stoops to employ human methods and human expedients in order to quell our doubts and satisfy our faith. Not a loophole for doubt is left. As firmly established as Jehovah's throne is the gift: "Ye shall inherit it, one as well as another." 'Tis not a matter of purchase; it is his spontaneous gift. "I am Jehovah; therefore I change not."

III. THIS INHERITANCE COMPRISES DISTINCT REWARDS FOR FAITHFUL SERVICE.

"Joseph shall have two portions." It would be a serious mistake to suppose that heaven contained equal measures of honour and of joy for all. In all likelihood there is greater diversity in eminence and in joy than on earth. From the lips of the unerring Judge the verdicts fall, "Be thou ruler over ten cities. . . . Be thou ruler over five cities." The place of honour on Christ's right hand shall be given to him "for whom it is prepared." In proportion to fidelity here shall be reward there. Even Jesus Christ himself tastes a richer joy as the result of his suffering. "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross;" "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life for the sheep." For some there is in store "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

IV. THE HEAVENLY INHERITANCE HAS A PLACE FOR SPIRITUAL AFFINITIES. The favoured occupants still dwell according to their tribes. In St. John's enumeration of the redeemed he reads the muster-roll of the tribes. Each tribe had its tale complete—it numbered twelve thousand. To the same effect Jesus affirmed, "In my Father's house are many mansions." The demarcations made by family and social lines on earth will be obliterated; but instead, new associations, new affinities, will appear. The denizens will be drawn closer together, or less close, according to spiritual tastes and proclivities. "He that doeth the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." There will be emulation, and a measure of seemly rivalry, while envy and jealousy will be unknown.

V. THE HEAVENLY INHERITANCE WILL BE COMPREHENSIVE IN CITIZENSHIP. "Ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you . . . they shall be unto you as born in the country." The old spirit of exclusiveness shall cease. Earthly nationality is an accident, which possesses in itself no excellence. Concerning Greek, or Barbarian, or Hebrew, "God is no respecter of persons." In Christ Jesus "neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but simply a new creature." The distinction in God's kingdom is character. Demarcation is between the excellent and the vile. He who has in his breast the faith of Abraham will receive a welcome, while he who inherits only Abraham's blood will be excluded. No matter in what clime a man is born, no matter what the colour of his skin, if he chooses God to be *his* God and Sovereign and Friend, he shall find a place among the citizens; he shall obtain a lot among one of the tribes. "Wherefore," saith God, "separate yourselves from the evil, and be ye clean, and I will receive you: I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The simple term of citizenship is a "new birth." "Except ye be converted, and become as a little child"—such is the condition to Jew and Gentile alike—"ye cannot enter the kingdom of God." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." There is world-wide comprehensiveness, coupled with self-imposed exclusiveness.—D.

Vers. 1—12.—*The river of life.* In this noble vision we have a prophecy of that great redeeming power which Jesus Christ should introduce to the world, and we have some insight given us of its triumphs in the far future. Of this wonderful river we have to inquire into—

I. ITS DIVINE SOURCE. The river flowed "from under the threshold of the house"—from the very dwelling-place of Jehovah. The river of life has its source in the Divine, in God himself, in his fatherly yearning, in his boundless pity, in his redeeming purpose. The heavens themselves pour down the rains, which feed the springs, which make the rivers of earth; but from above the clouds, from one whom "the heaven of heavens cannot contain," comes that river of life which a wasted and despoiled world is waiting to receive. It is a Divine mind alone that could conceive, a Divine heart alone that could produce, such a benevolent force as this.

II. ITS SPIRITUAL CHARACTER. The river of the gospel of Christ is the river of Divine truth. The kingdom of God is to be established by purely moral and spiritual agencies. When violence is used to promote it, there is a miserable departure from its essential spirit, and there is a serious injury done to its final triumph. For it wins by other and better means. And as water is itself composed of two elements, so the truth of God in the gospel of Christ is twofold. It includes the truth we most want to know *concerning ourselves*—our nature, our character, our position before God, our

possibilities in the present and in the future; and also the truth we most want to know *concerning God*—his character and disposition, his purpose of mercy, his supreme act of self-denying love, his overtures of grace, his summons to eternal life.

III. ITS TWO SOVEREIGN VIRTUES. 1. *That of renewal.* All kinds of fish live in its waters (vers. 9, 10); many trees grow and thrive on its banks, nourished by its streams (ver. 7); "everything lives whither the river cometh" (ver. 9). 2. *That of cleansing.* Such are the virtues of this river that, flowing into the Dead Sea, it sweetens even its salt waters and cleanses them of their bitterness, so that fish once more live therein: "Its waters are healed" (ver. 8). Such is the gracious and beneficent action of the truth of the gospel of Christ. (1) It is the source of new life; it revives and it sustains. It finds men and communities in spiritual death, and it imparts a new and blessed life; before it comes is a dreary moral waste, after its waters have begun to flow there is beauty and fertility. *Peoples* that seemed wholly lost to wisdom and to righteousness are regained; *homes* that appeared hopelessly darkened with sin and shame are made light with its beams of truth and grace; *hearts* that were desolate and deathful are filled with peace and joy and immortal hope. Everything lives where this blessed river comes. (2) It is the one great cleansing power. Into the darkest and foulest places it enters, and it brings with it sweetness and purity; corruption cannot live where its waters pass, but disappears before them. This is true, not only of the hearts and the homes of men, but of districts, of cities, of countries.

IV. ITS GLORIOUS ABUNDANCE. (Vers. 3—5.) Once a small stream, it is now a broad, deep river, whose course nothing can check, whose waters are inexhaustibly full, whose beneficence nothing can measure. It has come down these many centuries, it has girdled the whole earth, it will flow on and on until all the nations have been renewed. 1. Have we partaken of its life-giving waters? 2. Are we gaining therefrom the healing and the growth they will yield?—C.

Ver. 12.—*The double service—meat and medicine.* So nourishing should be the waters of this (allegorical) river that the trees which they fed upon its banks should produce a never-failing fruit and an unfading leaf, "and the fruit thereof should be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." The gospel of Jesus Christ perfectly fulfils the prophecy; its properties and provisions are such that it supplies ample food (or meat) for the sustenance, and all healing (or medicine) for the recovery of the human soul. Taking the latter first, as being first required, we have—

I. THE RESTORING VIRTUE OF THE GOSPEL. The leaf of the tree of life is "for medicine," or "for bruises and sores" (marginal reading). 1. How *great is the need* for such medicine as this in "a bruised and sore" world like ours! On every hand are men and women who are chafed with the worries of life, who are perplexed with its problems, who are smitten and are sore by reason of its varied persecutions, who are worn and wearied with its excessive toils, who are badly wounded by its heavier sorrows, by crushing loss, by darkening disappointment, by saddening bereavement, by disabling sickness, by cruel disloyalty. And beyond these there are those who are *stung with shame*, who have been awakened to a sense of their guilt before God, and are filled with a holy shame, a compunction which is the first step to true blessedness, but which "for the present" is grievous and distressing to the soul. 2. How *invaluable is the remedy* which this tree of life provides! To such wounded hearts comes the healing Saviour; he comes (1) with tender sympathy, offering himself as the Divine Friend, who is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" (2) with the comfort of his own example, as our Leader, "whose way was much rougher and darker than ours," and who asks us whether "it is not enough for the disciple to be *as* his Lord;" (3) with his Divine aid, ready, at our appeal, to revive us by his indwelling Spirit and grant us such sustaining grace that, instead of groaning under the blow, we can even glory in bearing it for him (2 Cor. xii. 9); (4) with his gracious promises, offering pardon, peace, eternal life, to every penitent and believing heart; thus is he the Divine Healer of the bruised and bleeding hearts of men.

II. THE NOURISHING POWER WHICH IT POSSESSES. "The fruit thereof shall be for meat [or, 'food']." When health has been restored, when the medicine of the leaf has done its work, then there needs to be sustenance in order that the recovered strength

may be maintained. Shall we not find the nourishment where we found the healing? The gospel of Christ meets this our need by providing: 1. *Divine truth.* All that truth concerning the nature, character, will, purpose, of God our Father and our Saviour which we have revealed to us in the Word of God, and more particularly in the teaching of his Son, who came forth from him and was one with him. All that truth also which relates to our spiritual nature, to our duty, to our privilege, to our prospects. 2. *Christian fellowship.* For the society of the holy is a sustaining power that builds up and makes strong in faith and purity. 3. *The action of the Spirit of God.* We are "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Such ample and such fitting food as this makes strong for testimony, for endurance, for energetic action, for growth unto the full stature of Christian manhood, for readiness for the heavenly kingdom.—C.

Vers. 13, 14 (with ch. xliv. 28).—*The threefold inheritance.* "Ye shall divide the land for inheritance;" "Ye shall inherit it, one as well as another;" "I am their Inheritance . . . I am their Possession." These passages speak of two kinds of inheritance, and there is a third which remained to be revealed, and still remains to be possessed.

I. THE MATERIAL INHERITANCE. According to the prophetic vision the land of Israel was to be fairly divided among the different tribes. The prospect here held out is the possession of the soil—that soil which has within it the power of great material enrichment. Land we call "real property," as distinguished from that about which there is a measure of insecurity or fluctuation. Those who own the soil own that which cannot be taken away, and which, though its market value may rise and fall, and though it may be greatly enriched by diligence or impoverished by recklessness, still has the possibility and the promise of produce and provision. Land, therefore, may well stand as the representation and type of all material inheritance. God gives to us here a certain heritage of this order; not, indeed, "one as another" in the sense of equality, for there is very great inequality. The inequality cannot be said to be due to Divine arrangement; it is rather the bitter consequence of all forms of sin and folly. God has given us a large, ample, fruitful, beautiful world for our earthly home. And if we were but actuated by the spirit of justice and of kindness, though there might not be anything like the absolute equality of which some men dream, yet would there be a goodly heritage for every child of man—enough for the comfort of every home, for the training of every mind; enough to satisfy, to beautify, to gladden. But there is a better heritage than this.

II. THE SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE. The Levites were not to have any land for their share; God himself and his service—this was to be their "Inheritance," this their "Possession" (ch. xliv. 28). What was true in their case is surely far more true in ours. To us to whom God has revealed himself in Jesus Christ a spiritual well-being is offered which does indeed constitute a noble heritage. "God has provided some better thing for us" (Heb. xi. 40). For us there is not the tangible mountain, the visible fire, the audible trumpet, but an inheritance which eye cannot see, nor ear hear, nor could the heart of man conceive (see Heb. xii. 18 with 1 Cor. ii. 9); for us there is a redeeming God, an Almighty Saviour, a Divine Comforter, a holy and elevating service, a heavenly home. In this last particular we have a third heritage, compared with which any partition of the soil was small indeed.

III. THE HEAVENLY INHERITANCE. There are those who pass through so great "a fight of afflictions" that even with all the boundless blessings and invaluable treasures which are "in Christ Jesus," life may seem of little worth; for these, as indeed for us all, there is the fair prospect of "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory"—of such glories that the sufferings of time are "not worthy to be compared" with them; the near presence of Christ; a home of perfect love and rest; reunion with the holy and the true; a sphere of untiring, elevating service; a life of growing blessedness.—C.

Vers. 22, 23.—*Jew and Gentile.* The introduction of this passage is an indication of the figurative and spiritual character of the whole prophetic utterance. The ideal community, the kingdom of Christ, was to be one that would attract those that were without and that should welcome all that came; it should be a welcome home to the

"stranger;" there the ancient "people of God" should find their inheritance; and thither those who had been his wandering and distant children should resort. Thus we gain the idea of—

I. THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE KINGDOM. As the Gentiles are here imagined as crossing the Jordan to sojourn within the borders of Israel, so we are to expect that men will come from beyond the pale of the Christian Church to find a home within its gates. 1. It ought to be far more attractive than it has been made. The discord, the envy, the strife among its members; the lamentable inconsistencies in the lives of too many of its professors; and the grave unwisdom with which its teachers have propounded their theories as if they were of the essence and substance of its truth;—these have been repelling enough. 2. Yet, on the other hand, the gospel of Christ has been a great attractive power. (1) The repose which it offers to the human mind, presenting to it one Divine and holy Creator and Sustainer of all things and beings; (2) the rest which it offers to the human heart, tendering to it full and immediate restoration to a Divine Father's love; (3) the enlargement which it offers to human life, making it a sacred and noble thing even in obscurity and poverty; (4) the high and glorious hope it holds out to the human soul, speaking of a heavenly future;—all this may well prove, as it does prove, attractive (*a*) to those of other faiths which have no such doctrine to preach, no such glad tidings to convey; (*b*) to those of no faith at all, and to whom this world proves to be insufficient for lasting joy.

II. THE WELCOME ON WHICH ALL COMERS MAY COUNT. 1. Christ welcomes them to his kingdom. There is no doubt at all as to the certainty or the cordiality of that welcome. Even the son that has gone into the very far country and done sad dishonour to the Father's Name is received back with every manifestation of parental joy (Luke xv.). Jesus Christ is not only the Approachable One, from whom no sincere seeker need shrink; he is the One that seeks, that comes to our own door, that stands and knocks and waits for entrance there (Rev. iii. 20). 2. All his true disciples welcome them. There may be found communities bearing the Christian name, whose gates are too narrow to receive many a true follower of Christ; but all those in whom the Spirit of Jesus Christ is dwelling, *and who do not misrepresent their Master*, will gladly welcome every "stranger" that comes to "sojourn" or to settle in the kingdom; they will encourage him to enter; they will give him the right hand of fellowship, they will find him a post in the vineyard of the Lord; they will make him to know and feel that in entering "Israel" he has come to his true home, that he is "as the home-born."—C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

The closing chapter of the prophet's temple-vision treats more particularly of the distribution of the land among the several tribes (vers. 1—29), and concludes with a statement concerning the gates, dimensions, and name of the city (vers. 30—35).

Vers. 1—29.—*The distribution of the land among the several tribes.* First, the portions north of the terumah (vers. 1—7); secondly, the terumah (vers. 8—22), embracing the portions of the priests and Levites (vers. 8—14), with the portions for the city (vers. 15—20) and the prince (vers. 21, 22); and thirdly, the portions south of the city (vers. 23—30).

Vers. 1—7.—*The portions north of the terumah.* These should be seven, lie in parallel strips from the Mediterranean to the east border, and be allocated to the tribes of Dan, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, Reuben, and Judah. The divergences between this and the earlier division under Joshua (xiv.—xix.) are apparent. (1) In that Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh received portions on the east of Jordan; in this no tribe obtains a lot outside of the boundary of the Holy Land. (2) In that the allocation commenced in the south with Judah; in this it begins in the north with Dan (for the reason, see Exposition). (3) In that the most northern portions, those of Asher and Naphtali, started from a point a little above Tyre; in this the most northern portion, that of Dan, proceeds from the entering in or the south border of Hamath, some fifty or sixty miles north of

Damascus. (4) In that the portions were scarcely ever parallel; in this they always are. (5) In that the portions of Judah and Reuben lay south, and that of Dan west of Jerusalem; in this all three are situated north of the city.

Vers. 1, 2.—**The names of the tribes.** The tribe of Levi being excepted, the number twelve should in the future as in the past division of the holy soil be preserved by assigning to Joseph portions (ch. xlvii. 13), one for Ephraim and one for Manasseh. **From the north end.** On the former occasion the allotment had begun in the south of the land and proceeded northwards; on this it should commence in the north and move regularly southward. The alteration is sufficiently explained by remembering that, after the conquest, the people were viewed as having come from the south, whereas at the restoration they should appear as entering in from the north. **To the coast of** (better, *beside*) **the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to** (literally, *to the entering in of*) **Hamath, Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus.** This was the north boundary of the land from west to east, as already defined (ch. xlvii. 16, 17); and with this line the portion of Dan should begin. The portion should then, as to situation, be one lying **northwards, to the coast of** (or rather, *beside*) **Hamath.** That is to say, beginning with the border of Hamath, it should extend southwards. **For these are his sides, east and west** should be, *And there shall be to him sides east, west*, meaning "the tract between both eastern and western boundaries," rather than as Hitzig translates, "And there shall be to him the east side of the sea," signifying that his territory should embrace the land east of the Mediterranean;" or as Hengstenberg renders, "And they shall be to him the east side the sea," equal to "the tract in question should have the sea for its east border." Then, as this applies equally to all the tribe-portions, Hengstenberg regards "to him" (לוֹ) as pointing to "the whole of the tribes combined into an ideal unity," but expositors generally agree that "to him" should be referred to Dan, whom the prophet had in mind and was about to mention. **A portion for Dan should be** *Dan one* "portion," חֵלֶק (ch. xlvii. 13), rather than "tribe," שֵׁבֶט, as Smend proposes. To take אֶחָד as alluding to the enumeration of the tribes is indeed countenanced by Ezekiel's mode of numbering the gates (vers. 30—35); but Ezekiel's style in vers. 30—35 will be preserved here also if חֵלֶק precede "Judah," thus: "the portion of Dan one." "The presupposition that one tribe should receive exactly as much as another led to the individual tribe's portion being considered as a *monas*" (Kliefoth). In the first division of the land, Dan's portion was small, and situated west of the territories of Ephraim and Benjamin.

Vers. 3—7.—After Dan, **Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh** (the whole tribe), **Ephraim, Reuben,** and **Judah** should receive portions, each the size of Dan's, and, like his, stretching from the east side to the west, each joining on to the border of its predecessor, and the seven portions together occupying the whole space between the north boundary of the land and the portion of the Levites. Among the differences distinguishing this from the division made by Joshua, these may be noticed: (1) Reuben and Manasseh are brought from the east of Jordan to the west, and Reuben inserted between Judah and Ephraim. (2) In order to make room for these, Zebulun, Ephraim, and Benjamin are displaced, and located south of the city. (3) Dan heads the list, instead of fetching up the rear as on the last occasion. (4) Ephraim loses her former position next to Judah.

Vers. 8—22.—The terumah, or priests' portion (vers. 8—12), with the portions for the Levites (vers. 13, 14), for the city (vers. 15—20), and for the prince (vers. 21, 22).

Ver. 8.—The terumah, already referred to (ch. xlv. 1—5), is here more minutely described. (1) In *situation*, it should be by the border of Judah, *i.e.* contiguous to Judah's territory on the south. Hence it should embrace all the above specified portions. (2) In *breadth*, from north to south, it should be **twenty-five thousand reeds**, this being undoubtedly the word to be supplied. (3) In *length*, it should be as one of the other parts, extending from the east to the west side of the land. (4) In *relation to the sanctuary*, this should be in the midst of it, not necessarily in the exact geographical centre of the whole terumah in the larger sense, but generally in a central position.

Vers. 9—12 refer to the priests' portion proper, setting forth (1) its *dimensions*, 25,000 reeds along the north and south boundaries from east to west, and 10,000 reeds from north to south along the east and west sides, so that it should form an oblong or rectangle of 25,000 × 10,000 reeds = 548 square (geographical) miles; (2) its *relation to the sanctuary*, which should stand in its midst, in this case should occupy the exact geographical centre; (3) its *destination*, viz. for the priests that are sanctified of the sons of Zadok—better than "that which is sanctified is for the priests," as

Ewald and Hitzig propose; (4) its *character*, most holy; and (5) its *position*, by the border of the Levites, *i.e.* with the Levites' portion adjoining it, but whether on the north or the south is not stated, and cannot yet be determined (see on ver. 22).

Vers. 13, 14.—The Levites' portion is next described by its *situation*, as lying over against—לְאֶצֶל, "at or near," answerable to (Revised Version), parallel with (Keil)—the border of the priests; by its *dimensions*, as twenty-five thousand reeds in length, from east to west, and ten thousand reeds in breadth, or from north to south, *i.e.* it should be as large as the priests' portion—in point of fact larger, since the space necessary for the sanctuary required to be deducted from the former; by its *tenure*, which was such that the Levites could neither sell, exchange, nor alienate it, any more than under the Law the Levites could sell the field of the suburbs or pasture-lands of their cities (Lev. xxv. 34); and by its *character*, which, as consisting of the first-fruits of the land, *i.e.* of the first portion of the land heaved up or presented in offering (see ch. xlv. 1), was holy unto the Lord (cf. ch. xliv. 30). The changes in the text made by the LXX. and favoured by Hitzig and Smend—"to the Levites" instead of "the Levites" (ver. 13), and "twenty" instead of "ten thousand" (ver. 13)—are unnecessary.

Vers. 15—19.—In the same way the portion for the city receives detailed exposition.

Ver. 15 gives four particulars. (1) The city portion should consist of the five thousand reeds' breadth of the entire terumah remaining after the deduction of the priests' and Levites' portions. (2) It should lie over against (עַל־פְּנֵי); *in front of*, and therefore parallel with, the five and twenty thousand cubit-lengths of which these were composed. (3) In character it should be a profane place, *i.e.* a place devoted to common use as opposed to consecrated ground (comp. Lev. x. 10), and designed for the city, *i.e.* for dwelling, and for suburbs, *i.e.* for the erection of houses, and for an open space or precinct (מִגְרָשׁ) around the city, similar to that around the sanctuary (see ch. xlv. 2). Among the Romans "a space of ground was left free from buildings, both within and without the walls, which was called *pomœrium*, and was likewise held sacred" (see Adam's 'Roman Antiquities,' p. 62). (4) The city should stand in the midst thereof, as the sanctuary in the midst of the priests' portion (ver. 10).

Ver. 16.—The dimensions of the city should be four thousand five hundred reeds on the four sides; in other words, it should form a square (comp. Lev. xxi. 16). The חמש, left unpunctuated by the Massorites, and marked as "written but not to be read," should be omitted as an error.

Vers. 18, 19.—The remaining portions of the terumah should be two strips of land, each 10,000 × 5000 reeds, one on each side of the city, the increase or produce of which should be for food unto them that serve the city. By "them that serve the city" Hitzig and Smend understand its ordinary inhabitants, since a district may be said to be cultivated through simple residence upon it (compare *colere locum*). Hävernick, after Gesenius, thinks of the workmen who should be employed in building the city, against which may be urged that the city is supposed to be already built. Hengstenberg, with whom Plumptre seems disposed to agree, can only see in the city servers "a militia who take the city in the midst." Keil and Kliefoth find them in the labouring classes, who should not in this future state, as so often in ordinary states among men, be destitute of a possession in land, but should receive an allotment for their maintenance. But an obvious objection to this view is that it hands over the city land exclusively to the labouring classes, forgetting that the "other" classes require support as well as they. Probably the best interpretation is to regard עֹבְדֵי הָעִיר, "them that serve the city," as standing in antithesis to the other two classes already mentioned—the Levites, whose office should be to serve the tabernacle (see Numb. iv. 24, 26; xviii. 6, in which עָבַד is employed to denote the service of the Levites); and the priests, whose special function should be to serve the altar (see Numb. xviii. 7, in which, again, the same verb is used). Thus regarded, "they that serve the city" will mean all engaged in secular pursuits in the city, which approximates to the view of Hitzig; and the prophet's language will signify that all such should derive their sustenance from the city lands, *i.e.* should either have direct access to these lands to cultivate them for themselves, or should obtain a share in the produce of these lands for other services rendered to the city. With this accords the further statement that those who served the city should serve it out of all the tribes of Israel; *i.e.* its inhabitants should not, as formerly, be drawn chiefly from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, but contain representatives from all the tribes of Israel (comp. ch. xlv. 6).

Ver. 20.—All the oblation, the whole terumah, must in this verse include the three portions already marked out for the

priests, the Levites, and the city. Added together, they should form a square of **five and twenty thousand** reeds. Hence it is added in the second clause, **Ye shall offer the holy oblation four square, with the possession of the city.** Hitzig, Kliefoth, and Keil translate, "To a fourth part shall ye lift off the holy terumah for a possession of the city," as if the sense were that the area of the city possession should be a fourth part of the area of the whole terumah. That 5000 of breadth is a fourth part of 20,000 of breadth may be admitted; but that the city portion was not in area a fourth of the other two, a little arithmetic will show—the area of the whole terumah being 25,000 × 25,000 reeds = 625,000,000 square reeds, and that of the city possession being 5000 × 25,000 reeds = 125,000,000 square reeds. Hence the Authorized and Revised Versions are probably correct in taking רְבִיעִית, "a fourth part" (see Exod. xxix. 40), as equivalent to רֹבַע (ch. xliii. 16), *τετράγωνον* (LXX.).

Vers. 21, 22.—The prince's portion should take up **the residue** of the original oblation, or terumah (see ver. 8), from which had been withdrawn the aforesaid square containing the portions of the Levites, the priests, and the city. This residue should consist of two strips of land, situated one on each side of the holy oblation (here, of the priests and Levites) and of the possession of the city, and running along the whole length of the five and twenty thousand of the oblation (here the three portions composing the square), and extending eastward to the Jordan and westward to the Mediterranean. The last two clauses of ver. 21, which should read, *And the holy oblation and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the midst of it*, implies that the two parts of the prince's portion, the eastern and the western, should be equal. Ver. 22 teaches that the whole intermediate territory between the border of Judah (in the north of the terumah) and the border of Benjamin (in the south of the terumah), from the possession of the Levites (the north portion of the terumah) and from (equivalent to "to") the possession of the city (the southern portion of the terumah), should belong to the prince. The mention of the possession of the Levites and the possession of the city as the extreme portions of the terumah, appears to indicate that the priests' portion lay between. Ewald translates as if the prophet meant to say the sanctuary should lie between the possession of the Levites and the possession of the city (in the first place), and between the two parts of the prince's land (in the second place), and yet again between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin (in the third place); but to read thus the text must be changed.

Vers. 23—29.—**As for the rest of the tribes,** these should follow on the south of the city portion, in parallel tracts, from east to west—**Benjamin, Simeon, Issachar, Zebulun, Gad**—till the southern boundary of the land should be reached, which boundary is again defined as in ch. xlvii. 19. Each tribe should receive, as those north of the terumah, **one** portion. The exact extent of this equal portion, though not stated, may be calculated—

Latitude of entrance to Hamath	34° 20′
" Kadesh (say)	30° 30′
	3° 50′

60 × 3⅚ = 230 geographical miles. But the whole breadth of the terumah was 25,000 reeds = 37 geographical miles. Hence 230 − 37 = 193 miles, which, divided by 12, gives 16 miles of breadth (from north to south) for each portion. The precise length from east to west is more difficult to estimate, in consequence of the varying widths of the land. Accepting this, however, as 55 miles at Jerusalem, the breadth of the prince's portion from east to west would be only 2½ miles on each side of the terumah; which, multiplied by 50 miles from north to south, would yield an area of 125 square miles on each side, or of 250 square miles in all. The disposition of the southern tribes differs from that made under the earlier division of the land—Simeon alone lying where he had been formerly placed, in the south quarter, Issachar and Zebulun being fetched from the north, Benjamin from the middle, and Gad from the west to keep him company. Upon the whole, the new arrangement has several marked peculiarities which distinguish it from the old. While agreeing with the old in this, that the three tribes, Dan, Asher, and Naphtali retain their original places in the north, and the temple is not deprived of its central position between Judah and Benjamin, it differs from the old in placing the three northern tribes side by side from west to east, but after one another from north to south, and exchanges the positions of Benjamin and Judah, transferring the former to the south and the latter to the north of the temple and the city. Then, while under the old neither priests, Levites, nor prince had a portion, all three obtain one in this. And, finally, while under the old no regard was had to the temple, in the new this forms the central point of the whole.

Vers. 30—35.—The closing paragraph is devoted to a statement of *the gates, dimensions, and name of the city.*

Ver. 30.—**The goings out of the city.** These were not, as Hitzig, Gesenius, Ewald, Schröder, and Currey have supposed, the city exits, or gates, which are afterwards referred to, but, as Kliefoth, Keil, Hengstenberg, and Smend suggest, the extensions or boundary-lines of the city, in other words, the city walls in which the gates should be placed, and which are measured before the gates are specified. The north wall, with which the rest should correspond, should be **four thousand and five hundred measures**; literally, *five hundred and four thousand* (not cubits, as Ewald states, but reeds) *by measure.*

Vers. 31—34.—**The gates of the city.** These should be twelve in number, three on each side, and named after the twelve tribes (comp. Rev. xxi. 12). The gates leading northward should be those of Reuben, Judah, and Levi, all children of Leah (Gen. xxix. 32, 35), as Keil observes, "the firstborn in age, the firstborn by virtue of the patriarchal blessing, and the one chosen by Jehovah for his own service in the place of the firstborn." The same three occupy the first three places and in the same order in the blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 6—8). Towards the east should lead the gates of Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan, the first and second sons of Rachel, and the third a son of Rachel's handmaid (Gen. xxx. 6, 24; xxxv. 18). In the blessing of Moses Benjamin precedes Joseph (Deut. xxxiii. 12, 13). The south gates receive the names of Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun, again all sons of Leah. The west gates are those of Gad, Asher, and Naphtali, that is, two sons of Leah's handmaid and one of Rachel's. It is observable that in the naming of the gates Levi resumes his place among the tribes, which necessitates the substitution of Joseph the original tribe-father instead of Ephraim and Manasseh his two sons. (On the phrase, **one gate of Judah**, literally, *the gate of Judah one*, see on ver. 1.)

Ver. 35.—The entire circuit of the city should, according to the above measurement of the walls, be **eighteen thousand** reeds, *i.e.* 18,000 × 6 (cubits) × 1½ (feet) = 162,000 feet = 30 miles. Josephus ('Wars,' v. 4. 3) reckoned the circuit of Jerusalem in his day to be thirty-three stadia, or four miles. **The name of the city from that day** should be, **The Lord is there.** It is debated whether "from that day" (מִיּוֹם) should be connected with the preceding or the succeeding words, and likewise whether שָׁמָּה should be translated "there" or "thither." The Authorized and Revised Versions, Ewald, Hävernick, Hengstenberg, Schröder, and Smend agree that מִיּוֹם belongs to the antecedent clause, but differ as to whether it should be understood as equivalent to "from this time forth," *i.e.* for all time to come (Ewald), or "from henceforth," *i.e.* from that day on, *i.e.* from the day of the city's building (Hengstenberg), which seems the most natural interpretation. Kliefoth and Keil prefer to conjoin "from that day" with the clause following, and expound the prophet's statement as saying that the city's name should be, "Henceforward Jehovah is there, or thither." Ewald, Hitzig, Keil, and Smend, with the two English Versions, decide for "there," Hävernick, Hengstenberg, Kliefoth, and Schröder for "thither," as the sense of שָׁמָּה. That "thither" is the ordinary import of שָׁמָּה is undoubted; but that by Ezekiel (see ch. xxiii. 3; xxxiii. 29, 30) and others (Jer. xviii. 2; Ps. cxxii. 5; 2 Kings xxiii. 8) it is used as "there" is also correct (see Gesenius, 'Lexicon,' *sub voce*). Happily, whichever rendering be adopted, the difference in significance is not material. If "there," the sense is that Jehovah will henceforth reside in the city; if "thither," that he will henceforth direct his regards towards the city. To object against the former view that Jehovah was in the future to reside in the temple rather than in the city is hypercritical, since, if Jehovah should make the temple his peculiar habitation, it would be for the sake of the city; if the latter view be taken, Kliefoth's explanation must be set aside that "from this day on Jehovah would direct himself towards the city; that the city and all concerning it may come to pass." As Keil observes, the name *Jehovah Shammah* was not to be given to the city before but after it was built (comp. Isa. lx. 14).

NOTE.

On the significance of the temple-vision.

The substance of what has been ascertained in the foregoing Exposition may thus be set forth.

1. According to the vision shown to the prophet, on returning to take possession of their own land in accordance with promises previously given (ch. xxxiv. 13; xxxvi. 24; xxxvii. 12, 21, 25), the tribes of restored and reunited Israel should first separate from the soil a holy heave, or terumah, as a portion for Jehovah (ch. xlv. 1—8). This terumah they should divide into three parallel tracts: assigning that on the north, two-fifths of the whole, to the Levites for chambers and for lands; that in the middle, also two-fifths of the whole, to the priests, for the sanctuary, which should occupy its centre, and for houses in which they might reside; and that in the south, one-fifth of the whole, for the city, which also should stand in its middle, for dwellings and for suburbs (ch. xlviii. 15).

Two strips of equal area on either side of the terumah, one extending westward to the Mediterranean and another eastward to the Jordan, should be handed over as a portion for the prince, out of which he should provide burnt, meat, and drink offerings in the feasts, new moons, sabbaths, and other solemnities of the house of Israel (ch. xlv. 17). The remainder of the land they should partition among themselves, allotting to each tribe an equal portion, which should extend from east to west across the entire breadth of the territory between the river and the sea, and be parallel to the holy oblation, but locating seven tribes north and five south of the terumah.

2. On returning to their own land, they should find that Jehovah had again, according to promise, established amongst them his sanctuary (ch. xxxvii. 26, 27), a description of which the prophet gives. It is noticeable that no indication is furnished by the prophet that the people should erect an edifice after the pattern and according to the measurements of the house shown, but simply a statement made that such should be the sanctuary in which they should worship.

3. On finding themselves once more in possession of the land which had been given to their fathers, and of a sanctuary prepared for them by Jehovah, the people of Israel should thenceforward serve him in accordance with the ordinances prescribed in the new Torah (ch. xliv.—xlvi.); should appear before him in the yearly feasts of the Passover and Tabernacles, in the monthly feasts of the new moon, in the weekly feasts of the sabbath, and in the daily ritual of sacrifice; should devolve upon the Zadokite (*i.e.* upon faithful) priests the duty of ministering at the altar, upon the Levites, to which rank the apostate (or unfaithful) priests of the monarchy should be reduced, that of attending to the sanctuary, or of serving the priests; and upon the prince that of providing the requisite sacrificial victims for the public festivals; the people for this purpose paying him the sixtieth part of their corn, the hundredth part of their oil, and the two-hundredth head of their flocks annually as a heave offering.

4. When Israel, thus revived and regenerated, restored and reunited, should serve Jehovah with a pure cultus, faithfully performing his commandments and walking in his ways, there should flow from the temple, as the habitation of Jehovah and the central institution of the land, down to the Jordan valley and into the Dead Sea, a miraculously increasing river, which should clothe the banks along its course with never-fading beauty and never-failing fertility, and on reaching the sea should render its waters salubrious, so that living creatures and fishes of every kind should swarm therein.

The *question*, therefore, which remains is —What significance should be attached to this temple-vision? The answer will depend on whether the principle of interpretation applied to it is literal or metaphorical, historical or typical, actual or symbolical. Round these two methods of interpretation the different views that have been entertained of this temple-vision may with sufficient accuracy be grouped.

I. VIEWS WHICH GROUND THEMSELVES ON A MORE OR LESS LITERAL INTERPRETATION OF THE VISION. The only point which all the views in this class have in common is that they regard Ezekiel as having furnished the sketch of a new constitution for Israel, civil as well as, but chiefly, religious, to be actually put in force at some time in the future, either immediately subsequent to the exile or afterwards, by the erection of a temple, the institution of a worship and a division of the land in accordance with the specifications furnished by Ezekiel.

1. That the "temple-vision" was designed, in whole or in part, to provide *a new constitution for the exiles who should return from Babylon* when the seventy years of captivity had run their course, is a view which has always commanded support. (1) It was favoured by Villalpandus, who saw in Ezekiel's "house" only a reminiscence of the Solomonic temple which the prophet, having conjured up before his imagination, placed on paper that it might serve as a model for the future shrine which the home-returning Israelites should erect; but inasmuch as Ezekiel's "house," while exhibiting not a few correspondences with Solomon's temple, at the same time discovered too many differences from that edifice to admit of being regarded as its exact transcript, critics soon perceived that the explanation of Villalpandus would require to be modified. (2) Accordingly, Grotius substituted for the temple as first constructed by Solomon, the same edifice as it existed in Nebuchadnezzar's time immediately before the destruction of Jerusalem. This, that scholar thought, would account for the variations from Solomon's temple which were perceptible in Ezekiel's "house;" but, as Kliefoth properly observes, while changes must undoubtedly have passed upon the temple (both upon the building and in its ritual) between the dates of its erection and of its demolition, these were little likely to be of such a character as to render it the harmonious and symmetrical structure it appears in Ezekiel's vision. (3) A third suggestion was then advanced by Eichhorn, Dathe, and Herder, and adopted by Hitzig,

that Ezekiel's temple was not so much modelled after Solomon's as freely imagined and presented to the exiles as an ideal sketch of the new religious and civil order which should be established in Palestine after the return from captivity; while to the objection that no such order was established by the Jews who came back from Babylon, it was replied that that was not the fault of Ezekiel, but of the people, and no detraction from the splendour of the ideal which had been held up before them, but only an indication of their inability to convert that ideal into reality. This view, however, besides being open to the objections to be afterwards urged against it in common with others, has this difficulty of its own to contend with, that in introducing the subjective element of fancy as the primal source of the "vision," it directly conflicts with the prophet's statement that the vision was expressly shown him by supernatural agency. (4) Closely allied to the preceding views, and in fact combining them, are those of Ewald, Kuenen, Wellhausen, Smend, Robertson Smith, Canon Driver, and their followers in Germany and in England. "Ezekiel may for a long time," writes Ewald ('Die Propheten des Alten Bundes,' vol. ii. p. 531), "have pondered with burning desire and lively recollection on the institutions of the fallen temple and kingdom; what appeared to him great and glorious therein may have deeply engraven itself upon his heart as the model of a future restoration; with such historical memories he may have compared the Messianic expectations and demands in detail, and thus in spirit have projected for himself the most vivid pictures of the best constitution and arrangement of the details at the hoped-for restoration of the kingdom." Kuenen ('The Religion of Israel,' ii. 114) calls the passage now alluded to "a complete plan for the organization of the new Israel." Wellhausen ('Geschichte Israels,' p. 62) speaks of the whole "vision" as "a programme for the future restoration of the theocracy." Smend styles Ezekiel "a lawgiver, who outlines a complete life-ordinance for the Israel of the future." Robertson Smith ('The Old Testament in the Jewish Church,' p. 374) characterizes his Torah as "a sketch of ritual for the period of restoration." Canon Driver ('An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament,' p. 273) says that ch. xl.—xlviii. give "the constitution of the restored theocracy," but adds (p. 274) that, "though the details are realistically conceived, it is evident that there is an ideal element in Ezekiel's representations which in many respects it was found impossible to put into practice." Thus, while presenting different shades of opinion, the interpreters and critics just mentioned, from Villalpandus downwards, are unanimous in regarding the "vision" as having been at once a temple plan, a cultus Torah, and a land act for the post-exilic age; but against this understanding of the "vision," in the judgment of such scholars and expositors as Hävernick, Fairbairn, Keil, Kliefoth, Wright, and Plumptre, the objections that may be urged are too numerous to admit of the belief that Ezekiel had any such intention as it supposes, viz. an intention to prepare beforehand a new constitution for the restoration era, which he believed to be at hand. These objections are the following:—

(1) If Ezekiel actually did intend to leave behind him a programme for the coming age, a constitution for the new theocracy which he foresaw should arise, it is, to say the least, remarkable that no suspicion of this appears to have crossed the minds of any of the post-exilic leaders, such as Zerubbabel, Joshua, Ezra, or Nehemiah, all of whom, besides, lived so close to Ezekiel's time that they must have been aware of it had any such intention existed.

(2) Nor is it simply that the post-exilic leaders gave no indication that they regarded it as binding on them to carry out the wishes of Ezekiel as these were set forth in this temple-vision; but in proceeding with their work of restoration, in the reconstruction of the temple, in the reorganization of the worship, and in the redistribution of the land, they went back to the state and condition of things which had existed in pre-exilic times, building their new temple on the exact foundations of the old (Ezra iii. 8—13), fashioning their worship in accordance with the prescriptions of the Levitical (or so-called priest-) code (which, "in its main stock," Driver, 'An Introduction,' etc., p. 135, admits existed, though in unwritten form, in pre-exilic times), and dividing their territory, if not after the land act of Moses, still less after that of Ezekiel.

(3) Add to this that, had the post-exilic leaders been desirous of following the directions of the "vision," they would have found it in many points quite impracticable. Not to speak, at least in this connection (see below), about the "very high mountain" or the "temple-river," which one scarcely sees how they could have improvised, it may be asked how they could have laid out on the summit of Moriah the precincts of the temple, which were 500 reeds (*i.e.* 3000 cubits, or 4500 feet) square, or a compass of over three miles and a half; or measured off the terumah, which enclosed an area of 2500 square miles, or

nearly twice as large as the whole of Judæa (see Conder's 'Handbook to the Bible,' p. 273); or divided the territory (which they did not possess) from the entrance of Hamath to the river of Egypt? Assuredly, if Ezekiel's plan was thus one which could not have been carried out, even had he meant it, Ezekiel may be credited with having had sufficient sense not to mean it.

(4) Then on the literal hypothesis, what is to be made of the "very high mountain" on which the temple was seen to rest, and of the river that increased without receiving any tributaries along its course; and of the sea, whose waters were rendered salubrious and made to teem with fish by the flowing into them of the temple-stream? A hill whose maximum elevation above the sea was not more than 2528 feet could hardly have been represented as a "very high mountain;" a water-canal or spring could scarcely have been made to do duty for a freely flowing river; while a visit to the Dead Sea will convince the most sceptical that its waters are to-day as unwholesome and fatal to life, both vegetable and animal, as they ever were. Considerations such as these are sufficient to indicate that the prophet never intended his language to be taken literally, or his "house" to be regarded as a new temple, his Torah as a new ritual, and his territorial distribution scheme as a new land act for the returned exiles.

(5) If more be needed to demonstrate that the prophet, in writing down these temple-measurements, sacrificial ordinances, and land arrangements, was not draughting a new constitution for post-exilic Israel, it may be found in this, that he removed the temple so completely beyond the precincts of the city. Whatever significance may have lain in that as a symbol (to be considered in the sequel), it is obvious that no Jewish patriot could have been expected to acquiesce in such an arrangement (already it has been seen that they did not), on the supposition that it was meant to be actually put in force; and hence it may be almost pronounced certain that, whatever notions may have lurked in the prophet's mind regarding it, he never seriously proposed it as a model to be copied by the builders of the post-exilic age.

2. A second view deserving mention, if less extended, is that of those who, while finding in the temple-vision a new constitution for restored and reunited Israel, and while conceding that in some small measure or degree it may have been put in force subsequent to the exile, nevertheless anticipate the coming of *a golden age, when it will receive an exact and complete fulfilment*, when the soil of Palestine will be divided, the temple erected at Jerusalem, and the worship of Jehovah established therein precisely as here outlined by Ezekiel. (1) It is not difficult to understand how this idea should from the first have been favoured by Jewish interpreters, who still expected Messiah, and believed that when he came he would not only replace the Jewish people in their own land, but set up the precise civil and religious arrangements that are here sketched. (2) But besides these, not a few Christian millenarians have embraced this interpretation, holding, as they do, not only that Jesus is the Messiah, but that in connection with and prior to his second coming—which they consider will introduce the thousand years' reign of the risen saints upon the earth—all the details of this vision will be carried out: the Jews, who shall then have become converted to Christianity, will return to their own land, which they will divide amongst themselves as here represented, erect a temple after the specifications here laid down, and institute a worship in accordance with the Torah here enjoined. Of this view a representative may be found in M. Baumgarten, who thinks that the points of contact between Ezekiel's temple and Solomon's are too numerous and close for one to resolve the whole picture into symbol and allegory, and who asks how, when Israel has returned to her God, she ought to give expression to her faith and obedience, if not in the forms and ordinances which Jehovah has given to them—these forms and ordinances being those embodied in Ezekiel's temple-vision (see Herzog's 'Real-Encyclopädie,' art. "Ezechiel"). But against this view, whether in its Jewish or Christian form, which expects a future glorification of the land, people, and religion of Israel, serious and insurmountable difficulties press.

(1) The objections already mentioned as declaring against the former view of a programme for the post-exilic age speak with equal force against this, which simply transfers the building of the temple, the institution of the ritual, and the dividing of the land to a future Messianic age, either with the Jews, that of a first, or with the millenarians, that of a second, coming. It is true the advocates of this theory experience no difficulty in dealing with any of the unusual phenomena which ordinarily hamper the literal interpretation, such as the rapidly increasing river, the sweetening of the waters of the Dead Sea, and the exceeding high mountain, because they anticipate such a glorification of Palestine in the Messianic, or millennial, era as

will not only admit of all these things being, but show them actually to be, realized. The passages of Scripture, however, which are supposed to promise the future external glorification of Canaan are, neither in the Old Testament (Isa. ii. 2—4; iv. 2—6; ix. 1—6; xi. 12; Jer. xxxi. 31—44; xxxiii. 15; Amos ix. 8—15; Zech. xiv. 8; Joel iv. 18; Micah vii. 9—13) nor in the New (Rom. xi. 15; Acts iii. 19—21; Rev. vii. 1—8; xiv. 1—5; xxii. 1, 2), so clear and decisive that their literal interpretation cannot be disputed, as in reality it is, to the extent even of denial, by the majority of Bible students; and accordingly, to claim these as substantiating the proposition that Canaan is ultimately to undergo such a transformation as to render the realization of Ezekiel's vision possible, is simply to beg the question at issue.

(2) In addition to this, the view undergoing examination is exposed to all those difficulties which tell against the millenarian doctrine in general, and this in particular, that the Jews will yet as a nation return to their own land. Were they to do so, it would not infallibly follow that they would re-erect a temple, worship Jehovah, and divide up the soil as here directed; but it is certain they would do neither of these things if they never did return; and that they never will return (as a nation) to occupy Palestine may at least be regarded as the more probable alternative of the two. Unless resort is to be had to miracle, it is not easy to discern how, after the Jews have renounced their unbelief and become Christian, they are to be prevented from intermingling with Christians and so losing one of their national characteristics, or how the tribal divisions which have for centuries been lost are again to be recovered, or how the land is to be rendered capable of sustaining them. Nor can one detect a sufficient reason for restoring the national existence of Israel in the closing years of the Christian dispensation, if not for the purpose of reintroducing the special worship of Judaism; and this, it should now be emphasized, occasions the greatest of all difficulties that impinge against the theory under review. For—

(3) If Israel as a nation is, in some golden era or millennial period towards the close of time, to return to her old land, re-erect her old temple, and reinstitute her old worship, what shall then (or even now) be said of the truthfulness of those passages of Scripture which teach that the Levitical system of tabernacle (or temple) and altar, of priest and sacrifice, of type and symbol, of external commandment and visible ceremonial, was from the first provisional in its nature, intended to serve as a shadow of good things to come, and designed to be set aside for ever when the higher and more spiritual system of the gospel had been inaugurated by the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Messiah (see Heb. v.—x.; and comp. John iv. 21—24; Col. ii. 17; Gal. iii. 23—25)? The simple suggestion that in the glorious millennial era, when Christianity as a system of religion will be near the culmination of its triumphal progress through the centuries, the Church of God, either in whole or in part, should return to the beggarly elements of Judaism, and set up the worship of God by means of bloody offerings and all the paraphernalia of altars and priests, is too ridiculous to be entertained for a moment by any one who has attained to a proper conception of the spiritual nature of that religion which mankind eighteen centuries ago received from Jesus Christ. "The whole teaching of the New Testament," writes Plumptre (unpublished manuscript notes), "and especially of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is opposed to the thought that the revival of a local sanctuary at Jerusalem, sacred above all other sanctuaries, the object of devout pilgrimages from all quarters of the world, with the perpetuation of annual sacrifices offered by the priests of the house of Aaron, living under the old ceremonial conditions, forms part and parcel of what we are to expect in the future history of Christendom. We are compelled, if we would be true to that higher teaching, to say that the visions of Ezekiel, like those of the Apocalypse, which in part reproduce them, can receive only, as symbols of the truth, a spiritual and not a literal fulfilment." To this the weighty utterance of Delitzsch (*Luthardt's Zeitschrift für kirkliche Wissenschaft*, 1880-1881, p. 289) may be added: "The New Testament Divine worship knows of a central sanctuary neither in Jerusalem nor upon Gerizim, and the religion of Jehovah, after it has become the religion of humanity, will never again return back into its chrysalis condition, and the setting up again of animal sacrifices as memorials of Christ's death would be, in face of the offering which was made upon the altar of the cross (Heb. x. 11—14), a return out of the essence into the shadow, out of the spirit into the letter, out of the law of freedom into the law of the 'elements of the world,' of which Christ was the end. A Christian world-cathedral belonging to Israel converted to Christ and again assembled in Jerusalem—a monument such as this of the history of salvation having reached its final aim, a finger-post like this directed heavenward towards God the All-merciful—will necessarily be of another sort than the temple of Old Testa-

ment prophets still fast bound in shadow work."

II. VIEWS WHICH GROUND THEMSELVES ON A SYMBOLIC INTERPRETATION OF THE VISION. A literal interpretation being impossible, the only alternative is to have recourse to the method of symbolic exposition; and, in addition to what has been already said, some things suggest themselves as strongly corroborative of this conclusion. *First*, there is the circumstance that the temple-plan, the ritual Torah, and the land act formed three successive parts of one extended "vision," which was shown to the prophet while in a state of "trance" or ecstasy, and were thus, as to mode of communication at least, totally unlike the tabernacle model, the Levitical code, and the land arrangements which were directly exhibited or imparted to Moses without the intervention of a "vision." Besides, the obvious correspondence of this closing vision to the earlier vision or visions (ch. viii.—xi.), in which were represented the desecration and destruction of the first temple, lends countenance to the inference that here also, as there, the tableaux presented to the prophet's inward eye were designed as symbols. *Secondly*, there is the absence of any instruction to the prophet, like that given to Moses, to see that all things were made, either by himself or others, according to the pattern which had been shown to him in the mount. From the beginning to the end no hint is discoverable that the prophet or his countrymen were expected to replace the building Nebuchadnezzar had overthrown by one fashioned after the pattern now disclosed. *Thirdly*, without emphasizing as strongly as Kliefoth does the numbers *three*, *seven*, and *twelve*, that run through the whole, the obvious symmetry maintained alike in the temple-buildings, sacrificial ordinances, and land arrangements, speaks for a symbolic as against a literal interpretation; and this impression is confirmed rather than weakened by observing that in respect both of the temple and the city, only (or principally) ground-measurements are recorded, while no allusion whatever is made to either building materials or architectural details. *Fourthly*, there are portions of this "vision" to which a symboblic interpretation must of necessity be assigned, as *e.g.* the temple-river and the healing of the waters of the sea; and this fact alone should be held as decisive, unless it should emerge that there are other portions to which a symbolic exposition is inapplicable. *Fifthly*, antecedent passages in Ezekiel, to which this temple-vision palpably looks back, declare more or less strongly for a symbolic interpretation. One of these has already been referred to, ch. viii.—xi. Another is ch. xx. 40—41, concerning which it may suffice to quote Plumptre's words in this Commentary: "The fact that Israel itself is said to be the 'sweet savour' (Revised Version) which Jehovah accepts (comp. 2 Cor. ii. 15; Eph. v. 2; Phil. iv. 18), suggests a like spiritual interpretation of the other offerings, though the literal meaning was probably dominant in the prophet's own thoughts." A third is ch. xxxvii. 26—28, in which a literal interpretation can be maintained only at the expense of truth. *Sixthly*, the analogy of similar prophetic adumbrations of Israel's future supports the idea that here also the writer's thought clothes itself in a symbolic dress. Let the pictures given by Jeremiah, Ezekiel's contemporary (xxxi. 38—40; xxxiii. 17—22), by Isaiah (lx. 1—22), Joel (iii. 18), Haggai (ii. 7—9), and Zechariah (vi. 9—15; viii. 1—8; xiv. 8—21) be attentively studied, and the conviction will be hard to resist that one and all they were designed in figurative language to foreshadow the spiritual blessings of a future time; and if such was the prophetic style generally, it seems reasonable to infer that Ezekiel, like his predecessors, contemporaries, and successors, was accustomed to use the same. *Seventhly*, the symbolic interpretation admits of being carried out, which is more than can be affirmed of the literal; and this consideration should decide the question as to how the "vision" should be understood in favour of the former rather than of the latter mode of exposition.

But now assuming the symbolic method of interpretation to have been fully vindicated as the only one properly applicable to the temple-vision, a fresh inquiry rises—Of what was the vision meant to be symbolic? And the reply to this may be stated in terms so general as to unite all who favour the ideal or allegorical method of interpretation. It may be said that the vision was designed to symbolize the great and gracious blessings Jehovah purposed at a future time, when he had turned again the captivity of Israel, to bestow upon his Church. So far as the *terminus ad quem* of this period of blessing is concerned, it is agreed by all expositors that that is the consummation of all things, when Israel's last and mightiest enemies, Gog and Magog, shall have been destroyed; only then do interpreters fall out when the *terminus a quo* is inquired after. Some, like Diodati, Greenhill, and Hongstenberg, find the point of departure in the return from Babylon; others, as Luther, Calvin, Cocceius, Pfeiffer, Fairbairn, Hävernick, Kliefoth, and Currey, begin with the Incarnation; while a third group, of whom Keil may be regarded as the representative, restrict the "vision" to the times of

the consummation, *i.e.* to the perfect service of God in the heavenly world.

1. It seems impossible to doubt that the "vision" had a reference to the times immediately subsequent to the exile. Without conceding to Hengstenberg that the whole prophecy, with the exception of ch. xlvii. 1—12, was destined then to receive fulfilment, or to Wellhausen that it was expressly composed as a new constitution for post-exilic Judaism, it may be granted that the exiles in Babylonia were intended to derive from it the hope and promise of a return to their own land, a re-erection of their fallen temple, and a reinstitution of their ancient worship. Indeed, it is hard to see how they could have failed to deduce such an inference from a perusal of the prophet's words. Forming, as the "vision" did, the last and culminating note of consolation addressed to the exiles, if the picture it held up before their minds was not a mere *ignis fatuus* intended to mislead—if it represented (even symbolically) any underlying reality—then that reality could only have been that in the future, it might be dim and distant, Israel and Judah, once more united and enlarged by accessions from the Gentiles, or the Church of God whom they represented, should serve Jehovah with a pure cultus in a land he had prepared for and given to them: and not a large amount of insight would be required to conclude that if Israel and Judah had any such destiny before them in the future, then assuredly their exile must terminate and their divided tribes be once more united in the old country. Whatever may have been the true significance of that picture, if it symbolized anything in which Israel and Judah were to have a share, it could not but occur, at least to the prophet himself and the more thoughtful of his first readers, that it prognosticated the dawning of brighter days, when Jehovah should turn again the captivity of his people, and re-establish them in their own land.

2. Similarly, the view of those who find in the vision a symbol of the Christian Church as a whole, or, in the words of Kliefoth, "the Christian Church in its origin, its development and influence in the world, and its completion in the hereafter," has much to support it. That Ezekiel perfectly understood the significance of his own "vision" is not asserted, and is not likely to have been the case (see 1 Pet. i. 11); all that is wished to be affirmed by those who adopt this view is that Ezekiel's picture of a new temple, a new worship, and a new land pointed to a state and condition of things which first began to be realized when the Christian dispensation was established by the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ; and certainly there are few particulars in which the import of the symbol (looked at in this light) cannot be at once and clearly traced. Without claiming it as a point in favour of this view that the vision makes no mention of any building materials, inasmuch as the Christian Church is composed of "lively stones," or believing and gracious souls (1 Pet. ii. 5), the entrance into the temple of the glory of God (ch. xliii. 1—6) found and still retains its counterpart in the perpetual inhabitation of the Church by the Spirit of Christ (Eph. ii. 21, 22). The awful sanctity with which the temple was surrounded, increasing as one approached it from the outside, beginning with the holy terumah, and advancing successively to the priests' portion in the midst of which the temple stood, to the precincts five hundred reeds square which encompassed the court, to the suburbs or "void places" which ran round the outer wall, to the seven steps which conducted into the gateway, to the outer court, to the eight steps leading up to the inner court, and finally to the ascent by which access was gained to the "house,"—all this fitly symbolized the superior holiness which should belong, and in point of fact does belong, to the Church of God under the gospel. So the absence of both high priest and great Day of Atonement in Ezekiel's temple was an adumbration of the time when the ever-living High Priest of the house of God having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, all Jehovah's worshippers should be priests in their own right, whose services should be acceptable through Jesus Christ. The daily sin offering, and the similar offerings on the solemn feast-days, meant that in the Church of the future there should be a constant remembrance of the great Propitiation that had been offered once for all, and an ever-renewed appropriation of the same by those who worshipped. The greater symmetry and fulness in the burnt offerings and meal offerings served to typify the more thorough self-consecration of Jehovah's worshippers, and their more intimate fellowship with him in the new dispensation. That the prince should be charged with the responsibility of providing victims for all the public festivals, and on the occasion of their celebration should enter and retire from the temple courts in their midst, was a foreshadowing of the truth that all the offerings of a Christian worshipper must be presented through Christ, who thus, as it were, ideally approaches the heavenly throne surrounded by his people. The miraculously flowing river rising in the temple, and increasing in width and depth as it flows, creating life and beauty wheresoever it comes, was an easily understood picture of

the spiritually healthful and vivifying influences of the gospel. The equal division of the land among the tribes, and the introduction of the sons of the stranger to equal privileges with the Israelite, may have been designed to intimate that when the new condition of things arrived to which the vision looked forward, *i.e.* when the Christian era dawned, the distinction between Jew and Gentile should no more exist (Eph. ii. 14—16), and all the members of the new Israel should share alike in the inheritance of which Canaan was the earthly emblem. The separation of the temple from the city may have pointed to the fact that in that coming age the Church should be an institution altogether distinct from and no longer identical with the state, as under the Hebrew dispensation it had been. These, with other instances that might be given, show how easily the whole symbol may be understood of the Christian Church on earth, which was the view commonly entertained by the Reformed theologians, who did not, except indirectly, employ it as typical of the kingdom of God in its perfect or heavenly condition.

3. This, however, is the view taken of the vision by both Kliefoth and Keil, the first of whom does not, while the second does, exclude all allusion to the present or historical condition of the Christian Church. In the vision Kliefoth, while discovering some things, as for instance the sin offerings, that can only be applied to the present or temporal form of the Church, finds others, as *e.g.* the temple-river, which he holds can only have its counterpart in the river of the Apocalypse (Rev. xxii. 1). On the other hand, Keil argues that only one thing presupposes that Israel has still to take possession of (the heavenly) Canaan, viz. "the directions concerning the boundaries and the division of the land," and proceeds to say, "It follows from this that the prophetic picture does not furnish a typical exhibition of the Church of Christ in its gradual development, but sets forth the kingdom of God established by Christ in its perfect form." In short, Keil regards the whole "vision" as a symbolic representation, in Old Testament language and ideas —the only way in which such representation could have been given so as to be intelligible to Ezekiel's readers—of the introduction of God's spiritual Israel into their heavenly Canaan, and of the perfect service they shall there render to Jehovah. That the heavenly condition of the Church of God was designed to be depicted it seems necessary to hold, both from the position of the vision in Ezekiel's book and from the contents (in part) of the vision itself. The vision occurs, as the last note of consolation offered to the exiles, after the vision of their moral and spiritual resuscitation and establishment in their own land, with David, Jehovah's Servant and King, ruling over them, and in close connection with, if not immediately after, the final conflict with Gog, which leads up, one should say, quite naturally to the complete blessedness of the future life. Then the correspondence between the river in John's description of the heavenly Jerusalem, and this temple-stream in Ezekiel's vision, renders it impossible to exclude from the latter all allusion to the heavenly state. At the same time, there are points, even on Keil's showing, that cannot well be harmonized with the theory that only the heavenly and glorified form of the Church is symbolized by the vision. One of these has been mentioned, the perpetuation of the sin offering; another is the precept concerning the hereditary property of the prince and its transmission to his sons; a third is the separation between the temple and the city; a fourth is the invasion of Gog, which, as Keil has observed, is represented as occurring after Israel has taken possession of the land. Hence probably it is wrong to restrict the significance of the "vision" so exclusively as Keil does to the heavenly world.

Upon the whole, it seems best to find a place for each of the above views in any interpretation of the vision; and this may be done by supposing that the vision was designed by its real Author—the Spirit of Christ (1 Pet. i. 11)—to set forth, by means of Old Testament imagery, a picture of that perfect service which ought to have been rendered from the first by Israel (after the flesh) to Jehovah, but was not, and which it was Jehovah's promise to the exiles would ultimately be rendered by that new Israel (according to the Spirit) he was soon to call out of the ruins of the old. In this way, as setting forth the ideal of a perfect worship which will not be completely realized until Israel reaches the heavenly Canaan, the "vision" admits of Keil's interpretation; but inasmuch as this ideal worship will not be attained to there unless the worship itself begins on earth in the Christian Church —to which not a few features in the symbol point—the vision is also susceptible of Kliefoth's exposition; while as the first step towards the calling out of the new Israel was taken when God turned again the captivity of the exiles, the view of Hengstenberg cannot be excluded.

A few words may be added on the bearing which the view just taken of the significance of the temple-vision has upon the chief critical question of the day as to the structure of the Pentateuch. The modern

theory, begun by Graf and Reuss, but perfected by Kuenen and Wellhausen, it is well known, is that, while the book of the covenant (Exod. xxi.—xxiii.) originated in the early years of the monarchy, and Deuteronomy not later than the reign of Josiah, the priest-code, as it is styled (Exod. xxiv.—xl. with some exceptions, the whole of Leviticus, and the most of Numbers), is a work of post-exilic origin, and that Ezekiel (xl.—xlviii.) constituted, as it were, the bridge by which the law-making spirit of the Hebrew religion passed over from the popular legislation of the Fifth Book of Moses to the highly developed and minutely articulated system of Leviticus. Into the general question it would be out of place in this work to enter; the most that can be done is to indicate how far the theory is entitled to claim support from the temple-vision which has just been expounded and interpreted. Nor is it needful, in doing so, to dwell upon the alleged evidence of Ezekiel's priority to Leviticus, derived from Ezekiel's language and the contents of his sacrificial Torah—this has been more or less done in the course of exposition—since the validity or invalidity of such (so-called) evidence depends entirely on the correctness or incorrectness of the presupposition which is commonly made, viz. that Ezekiel designed to draft a new constitution for the post-exilic Church. Could this have been made out, it would by no means have followed that Ezekiel's Torah, by its divergences from that of Leviticus, proved the later origin of the latter, since Ezekiel, having himself been a prophet, no less than Moses, was at liberty to abrogate or modify any pre-existing law if impelled to do so by the Spirit that originally taught Moses; but inasmuch as it has not been and cannot be made out beyond reasonable doubt—rather, inasmuch as strong grounds exist for holding that Ezekiel had no such intention, but designed to provide a complex symbol of the perfect relations which should subsist between God and his (spiritual) Israel, it is clearly not permissible to argue that Ezekiel was suggesting for the first time the course which temple-legislation should pursue in the new era which should commence when the exile was ended and the restoration begun. If all that Ezekiel had in contemplation was to furnish a symbol of the sort already indicated, it is manifestly an inference not warranted by the premisses that he desired to initiate a distinction which should afterwards be put in force between the priests who should serve the altar and the Levites who should serve the tabernacle, and to assign the former honour to the sons of Zadok, while inflicting the latter degradation on the Levites who had ministered at pre-exilic high places. If Ezekiel's fetching in of the sons of Zadok was merely a device to obtain a symbol of faithful and pure service, then the whole theory which has been so ingeniously erected on the so-called degradation of the Levites—a passage which has been styled "the key to the Old Testament"—runs the risk of falling to pieces, and, to use the words of Delitzsch (*Luthardt's Zeitschrift für kirkliche Wissenschaft*, 1880–1881, p. 288), "the degradation of the Levites, which certainly appears in Ezekiel as an innovation," becomes "another thing than a riddle to be solved by the new Pentateuchal theory."

HOMILETICS.[1]

Ver. 1 (first clause, "Now these are the names of the tribes").—*Names.* The tribes are here severally named. Elsewhere whole pages of the Bible are taken up with lists of names. Let us consider the significance of this method of assortment.

I. NAMES INDICATE INDIVIDUALS. Each tribe has its name; each person also has his own private name. Thus the community is broken up into its several constituent elements. God does not treat men in the mass. He takes "one of a city, and two of a family" (Jer. iii. 14). Each tribe of Israel had its separate district, each family its own allotted inheritance.

II. NAMES DESCRIBE CHARACTERS. This was the case with names in Old Testament times. It does not apply among us, excepting in the case of *soubriquets*. But the old suggestiveness contains a lesson for all time. Different men have different characters. All these varieties are known to God, even though some of them may be concealed from our fellow-men. It might often have happened that by some accident, misunderstanding, or act of malice, a false name would be given to a person—a good name to a bad man, or a bad name to a good man. No such error can be found in God's books, the books in which he reads the names of his people. There he notes the true character of all.

III. NAMES DIRECT APPEALS. We call a person by name to arrest his attention

and to show that we desire to speak to him individually, and we write his name on a letter in order that it may be sent to him and accepted by him as intended for himself. Christ calls his sheep by name (John x. 3). He knows each member of his flock separately, and has direct, separate, personal dealings with every one. God called young Samuel by name. We do not expect audible appeals from heaven. Yet God is changeless, and he just as truly seeks us out separately now as he sought out Samuel in the days of the judges.

IV. NAMES PRESERVE MEMORIES. History would be a hopeless morass but for the solid ground afforded in definite names. If a man has done anything worthy of fame he is said to have made a name. His name is now treated with respect and handed down to subsequent generations. There are names of honour and names of infamy. To Christ is given the name that is above every name (Phil. ii. 9). If one lives an ill life he may earnestly desire to be forgotten; but, alas! the stigma of disgrace is indelibly stamped on his name.

V. NAMES JUSTIFY CLAIMS. A signature gives authority. A name in a will entitles its owner to what is bequeathed under it. There are names "written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. xxi. 27), and all who own those names are entitled to an eternal inheritance with the saints in light. A man's name may not be down in the list of Israel's heirs, nor recorded in any Doomsday book on earth; yet if it is written in Christ's records it is secure for a possession better and richer than the most valuable estate that can ever be enjoyed in this world.

VI. A CHANGE OF NAME SIGNIFIES A CHANGE OF STATUS. Jacob, "the Supplanter," is named afresh Israel, "God's prince." Christ's people have a new name on their foreheads (Rev. xxii. 4). We may leave the evil name of the old life and enjoy the blessings that attach themselves to a true Christian name.

Ver. 14.—*An inalienable possession.* The people were not permitted to sell their allotments, and especial provision was made to prevent the priests from parting with their share of the fruits of the land.

I. THE CHRISTIAN INHERITANCE IS AN INALIENABLE POSSESSION. 1. *No enemy can take it away.* Christ secures it for his people, so that it is theirs for ever. We may lose all earthly things in the shocks and changes of life, but the heavenly treasure abides. So long as we hold it truly, no moth nor rust can corrupt it, no thief can then break through and steal it. 2. *The Christian has no right to part with it.* He can deny Christ, renounce the gift of God, and abdicate his position as one of the kings and priests of God. But he has no right to act in this way. When once he is called into the kingdom it is with a view of never departing from it. Though left free from external constraints, the bands of conscience forbid his ever giving up his glorious heritage. The vows of Christian fidelity are irrevocable.

II. IT IS A SIN TO ENDANGER THE CHRISTIAN INHERITANCE. As Christians, we have a charge to keep. Our estate in the kingdom of heaven is entrusted to us. But we may be false to our trust in various ways. 1. *By neglecting it.* So long as our heritage is faithfully kept no enemy can enter or injure it. But if the hedge is broken down the wild boar from the wood may come through and root up the tender vines (Ps. lxxx. 13). We need to watch over and carefully guard the privileges of the Christian life. 2. *By renouncing it for worldly things.* The priest might grow tired of his sacred office, and might prefer to have a farm of his own rather than be dependent on the sacrificial offerings of the people, while a lay Israelite, ambitious of the priesthood, might be glad to barter his estate for rank and office in the temple. This was forbidden. The Christian has no right to give up his allegiance to Christ and his inheritance in heavenly things for any earthly consideration. Having put his hand to the plough, he is never to look back.

III. THE INALIENABILITY OF THE CHRISTIAN INHERITANCE RESULTS FROM ITS RELATIONS TO GOD. The portion of the priests was holy, not because they had it, but because it was primarily God's share of the produce of the land. The Christian inheritance has special relations to God. 1. *It is purchased by the death of Christ, the Son of God.* A possession so acquired must have a profound sanctity attached to it. To throw away lightly a gift that was brought to us by means of the incarnation and crucifixion of our Lord is to despise God's most wonderful condescension, to trample

on the love of Christ in his most tremendous self-sacrifice. If he has died to make the inheritance ours, the least we can do is to prize it above all things. 2. *It is still rightly owned by God.* The priests enjoyed God's portion of the produce. It was still God's while they had it. Christ has called us into his kingdom to be his stewards. All we enjoy really belongs to him, and we shall have to give an account of our stewardship. If we destroy or alienate the vineyard with which we are now entrusted, we shall have no answer to give in the great day of reckoning.

Ver. 15.—"*A profane place.*" We are not to suppose that this place was devoted to evil uses. It was simply distinguished from the holy place of the temple. There were degrees of holiness—all the land holy when compared with heathen countries; Jerusalem especially the holy city; the temple the holy site in Jerusalem; and the holy place and the holy of holies the most sacred centre of the whole circle of sanctity. By comparison with the temple area the rest of the city of Jerusalem was called "profane."

I. GOD PROVIDES FOR THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF HIS PEOPLE. The so-called "profane place" was carefully mapped out, and ample provision was made for the life of the people in it. The laity was not ignored when the priesthood was provided for. It was never expected that the people would spend all their days in the temple, nor that they would need no comfort for their life in the world. God is not now only concerned with our attending to religious services at church. The greater part of life must be occupied with secular pursuits. These pursuits can be followed according to the call of God, and in occupying ourselves with them we may well expect that he will give the necessary supplies, guiding our energies, and ultimately blessing our toil if it is in accordance with his mind and will.

II. IT IS POSSIBLE TO LIVE A HOLY LIFE AMIDST THINGS CALLED PROFANE. The priests might be guilty of spiritual profanity while busily engaged in temple service; the laity might be truly occupied with a holy ministry, though on ground that was named profane. It is not necessary to be consecrated to the priesthood nor to enter a monastery in order to live "the religious life." The work of the busy world must be carried on, and it would be simply disastrous if all who were inspired with pure and lofty aims were to withdraw from its many necessary occupations. Not only would the service of life be neglected for want of men and women to employ themselves in it, but what work was accomplished by others would be degraded in character. This would just amount to handing the world and all its concerns over to the powers of wickedness. Christians are called upon to take the exactly opposite course, and so to be "the salt of the earth" (Matt. v. 13).

III. ADVERSE EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES DO NOT PREVENT SPIRITUALITY OF LIFE. The secularity of a man's occupations does not prevent him from being a Christian of the very highest type. The supposed profaneness of his circumstances cannot be accepted as an excuse for godless, sinful living. Nothing would be really profane if the heart were true and spiritual; for "to the pure all things are pure." It is sometimes supposed that it would be more easy for a man to live a religious life if he were a minister of religion. But then the temptation of professionalism would come in, and the business spirit endanger the sacredness of the most spiritual things, whereas when religion is wholly sought after for its spiritual use it is less in danger of sinking into a mere form. But the whole question turns on the spirituality of the character and conduct—rather than on the form of the occupations of daily duty.

Ver. 19.—*Serving the city.* A militia, selected from all the tribes of Israel, is to be marshalled as the garrison of Jerusalem. Thus representatives of the whole nation are to have a share in the service of the city.

I. MEN SERVE GOD BY SERVING MAN. They who serve the royal city serve the king. If we love not our brethren whom we have seen, we cannot love God whom we have not seen (1 John iv. 20). But a true-hearted love for God must inspire practical love for man. Obedience to the two great commandments is one common experience in the heart of the servant of God. It is a mistake that any should urge "the service of man" as a new religion for the age; this is the true ritual of the old religion of Christ (Jas. i. 27). There is no Christianity without it. Christianity is most vigorous

and fruitful when ministries of active benevolence are most vigorously maintained. Jesus was the Son of man, who "went about doing good."

II. ALL CLASSES SHOULD TAKE PART IN THE SERVICE OF MAN. The one tribe of Levi was told off for the service of the temple; but every tribe was to be represented in the city guard. The special work of the Christian ministry devolves upon those who are specially adapted to it, and called by God to devote their lives to it. It is not every Christian who is required to occupy the post of a minister of a Church or to go out as a missionary to foreign lands. But every man, woman, and child should take part in the Christian work of helping others. Every class in society, every order of mind, every gift, faculty, and opportunity can and should be used for this wide and varied service.

III. A CITY HAS PECULIAR CLAIMS ON CHRISTIAN SERVICE. Jerusalem was to be specially provided for as the capital of the land. The metropolis needs to be carefully guarded. But every city has its claims. These depend on several considerations. 1. *Great needs.* A city is a heterogeneous collection of human beings. The energetic are attracted and the helpless are drifted there. In the city human life is lived at its best and at its worst. The poverty, the vice, the degradation, that haunt the purlieus of great cities call for especial attention. The enemies that now attack our cities are not armed men besieging after the old style. But strong drink; gambling; profligacy; cruel oppression of workpeople; fierce competition among traders; selfish inconsiderateness on the part of the public, making this competition almost a necessity of life; overcrowding, rendering common decency a physical impossibility, and infant mortality a frequent occurrence; the tremendously rapid growth of the centres of population overtaking the means of Christian work; the obscurity and loneliness of life in a crowd permitting the unfortunate to perish unheeded;—these and other characteristic circumstances of modern city life call for redoubled energy on the part of all Christian people in great fields of work. Christ concentrated his ministry on the densely populated regions round about the Sea of Galilee. 2. *Great influence.* A city is a centre of influence to all the region round about. The metropolis is the heart of the nation. If there is righteousness in the centre, righteousness may flow through all the national life. Christianity, which came as a cosmopolitan religion, manifested from the first metropolitan affinities. The apostles concentrated their labours to a great extent on the principal cities of the empire—Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Corinth, Athens, Rome. The country-people were more slow to receive the gospel, and thus the names "pagan" and "heathen" came to stand for "non-Christian." It will be a bad thing for Christendom if the cities are lost to Christ.

Ver. 31.—*The city gates.* I. THE CITY GATES ARE FOR EGRESS. The citizens are not to remain always immured in their streets and houses. They are to go forth to the country—till their vineyards, lead their flocks over the hills, visit their neighbours. 1. *It is bad to be always in society.* Christ called his disciples away from the multitude to a desert place, to rest awhile. 2. *It is desirable to cultivate the spirit of enterprise.* We English have our island home guarded by the friendly sea, but we take care to have many gates, and to go forth over the wide world. We travel and trade; in discovery and adventure the hardy vigour of the British race finds scope, and grows by exercise. It will be a misfortune for England if this spirit of enterprise gives place to a more indolent, self-indulgent tone of life. The same spirit should be seen in the Church. We ought to have more energy and daring, not content to enjoy our privileges at home, but eager to go forth and do some fresh service for our Master. 3. *It is a Christian duty to carry missionary work out into the world.* Christians should go out of the gates of Christendom to bring the standard of the gospel into heathen lands.

II. THE CITY GATES ARE FOR INGRESS. 1. *Strangers should be welcomed.* The gates of the city of God are open day and night (Rev. xxi. 25). The heavenly Jerusalem is always ready to welcome new guests. The city is to be a metropolis of man, a centre and home for all travellers in the weary journey of life. It is utterly contrary to the spirit of Christ for a Church to show any spirit of exclusiveness, any desire to keep its privileges to itself. Christianity is for the world. "Whosoever will, let him come." 2. *The citizens should return home.* "Man goeth forth unto his work, and to his labour, until the evening" (Ps. civ. 23). Then

"The ploughman homeward plods his weary way."

After work in the fields comes rest in the home. We cannot be always engaged in Christian enterprises. It would not be healthy for a Church to be wholly absorbed in mission work. It must also have its own loving fellowship and refreshing worship.

III. THE CITY GATES ARE FOR PROTECTION. They are gates, not gaps. The well cared-for city of the olden times had massive gates with stout locks and bars, and perhaps a portcullis at each gate for additional protection. The city of God has ample means of warding off the attack of the enemy of souls. God has not cast his people out in a waste, howling wilderness to be a prey to evil creatures. He has called them into "a city which hath foundations" and walls and gates. Christ himself is the Lord of this new Jerusalem, and all are safe who are with him. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. viii. 1).

IV. THE CITY GATES MUST BE MANNED BY THE PEOPLE. 1. *They need guards.* The garrison of Jerusalem must concentrate its attention on the gates. Christ is the Captain, we are the soldiers; under him it becomes our duty to hold the gates. The sick, the aged, and women and children, are kept in the city while the men sally forth to attack the enemy. The gates must be guarded for the sake of the human trust within. The Church should guard the young, the feeble, the tempted. 2. *The guards are severally apportioned.* Each gate seems to be named after the tribe to whose soldiers it is allotted. There are various branches of the Christian Church, and there is separate work for each body of Christians. If one gate is taken, the city is endangered. Faithfulness is needed in all classes of Christians for the security of the whole Church.

Ver. 35.—*A glorious name.* The restored city of Jerusalem is to receive a new name, "The Lord is there." The announcement of this name makes a splendid conclusion to the Book of Ezekiel. The numerous and varied utterances of the prophet have carried us through scenes of shame and sorrow, and even of blood and terror; but above all has shone the vision of God and his grand providence, and the end of all is seen in the new city and temple of a renewed people.

I. THE NAME DESCRIBES A WONDERFUL FACT. Sin drives away the blessed consciousness of the Divine presence, though God is never really absent from any part of his dominions. But when God's people are reconciled to him he draws near to them in inward communion. 1. *A real presence.* This is not the name of a truth unrealized. God is now present with his people. He does not govern his city by deputy; he himself dwells there. 2. *A permanent presence.* "The Lord *is* there." This describes what is continuous. God is ever with his people. 3. *A wide presence.* He fills the city; all the citizens may enjoy his fellowship.

II. THE NAME DENOTES A HAPPY CONDITION. God is present for high and glorious purposes. 1. *To protect.* God is the Commander of the garrison, and he has innumerable heavenly armies whom he can summon to the relief of his hard-pressed people as occasion may require. If he is in our midst, we shall never be moved (Ps. xlvi. 5). 2. *To govern.* God is the Sovereign. If he comes, it must be to rule over us. The order and life of the Church depend on the Divine Spirit that dwells in the midst of her. But if God is thus present, he must be obeyed. Disobedience is sedition. 3. *To bless.* The very presence of God is sunshine to the soul. His communion with his people brings life and blessedness.

III. THE NAME COMMEMORATES A GREAT EVENT. "From that day." This phrase indicates a definite period. There were ages when it could not be used; there is a particular time after which it can be used, viz. the time of the restoration of Israel, and the rebuilding of the once ruined and desolate city. The glorious name takes its rise from this glorious event. 1. *After repentance.* Sin caused God to withdraw from the city. He returns to meet his penitent people, he dwells in the contrite spirit. 2. *Through redemption.* God calls his people back to their land after he has redeemed them from the power of their enemies. Christ's redemption opens the path for a return to God. He—our great Redeemer—is the Way to God. 3. *In restoration.* The people come back to their home and rebuild their city; then God manifests himself in the midst of them. God dwells in his Church from the time of Christ's great restoring work; he dwells in each soul as soon as it is restored to him. The thought of his presence commemorates our redemption.

IV. THE NAME PROCLAIMS AN IMPORTANT TRUTH. Not only is it stated that God

will be with his people, but this truth is to be constantly set forth by standing in the very name of the city. 1. *As a grateful acknowledgment.* If God is with us, we ought not to be ashamed of so wonderful a fact, nor should we ungratefully ignore it. Let this be in the forefront of our banner, let it be the inspiration of our song! 2. *As a necessary reminder.* There is a danger lest God's people should forget his presence (1) in doubt and distrust, or (2) in worldliness and self-sufficiency. 3. *As an inviting gospel.* Dwellers in other parts would learn the new, high name of the holy city, and so be led to seek the privileges of citizenship. A confession of Christian truth and a description of the blessings of the faith help to draw others to Christ and his grace.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Ver. 11.—*Fidelity.* It was highly creditable to these sons of Zadok that, when the children of Israel generally and the Levites in particular went astray, they resisted the influence of a very general example, and remained faithful to the worship and service of Jehovah. "Faithful among the faithless," they were recognized and remembered by God himself, and their fidelity was rewarded in the apportionment of the territory among the people. It is a virtue which every Christian should aim at possessing and exercising.

I. FIDELITY IS IN CONTRAST TO GENERAL UNFAITHFULNESS. Doubtless there was a period in the history of Israel when apostasy was remarkably general. But such is the weakness and vacillation, the inconstancy and mutability, of human nature, that fidelity is in every age and in every state of society a noticeable virtue. When multitudes turn from God and abandon themselves to error or superstition, to infidelity and irreligion, they are conspicuous and commendable who cleave unto the Lord with purpose of heart.

II. FIDELITY IS DISPLAYED IN THE RESISTANCE OF TEMPTATION. Two considerations account for unfaithfulness—the inducement of interest, indolence, worldliness, etc.; and the weakness of the moral nature, the frailty of resolution. To brave unpopularity, to dare to be singular, to turn a deaf ear to the instigations of the lower parts of the nature, to follow the guidance of deliberate convictions,—such is the way of honour and of piety. Life is a scene of discipline; none can escape the probation; the faithful endure it and profit by it.

III. FIDELITY CONSISTS IN KEEPING THE LORD'S CHARGE. We are all trustees to whom the great Ruler and Judge of all has confided a charge. It may be a deposit of truth, it may be a certain service to be rendered; but whatever it be, it is required in us as stewards that we be found faithful. There are those who boast of their fidelity to their fellow-men, who have, however, no just and practical sense of the duty of faithfulness to God himself. But of all our responsibilities the most sacred is that to him in whom we live and move and have our being, who has assigned to us our work and vocation on earth, and who will require of every one of us a strict account.

IV. FIDELITY IS A VIRTUE THE MANIFEST EXHIBITION OF WHICH MUST NEEDS INFLUENCE THE COMMUNITY FOR HIGHEST GOOD. The faithful are the salt of human society; they are a rebuke to the vacillating, and an encouragement and inspiration especially to the younger members of society whose aim it is to serve their generation according to the will of God. In Jewish history are to be found not a few illustrations of the beneficial effects of examples of faithfulness to God and to the mission and the witness appointed by God.

V. FIDELITY IS APPRECIATED AND REWARDED BY GOD HIMSELF. The text furnishes us with an instance of the Divine satisfaction with those who do not shrink from fulfilling the charge committed to them. And our Lord Jesus Christ has assured us that those who are faithful in a few things shall be made rulers over many things. The prospect of Divine approval may well sustain the servants of God when they have to endure tribulation, persecution, and desertion because of their steadfastness and integrity in the discharge of sacred duty; all this God is "not unrighteous to forget."—T.

Ver. 19.—*The service of the city.* Jerusalem was the metropolis of the Jewish state

and of the Jewish Church. Accordingly, it was regarded as the charge of the whole nation. All Israelites had an interest in its peace and prosperity, and all recognized the honourable obligation of providing for its welfare. In his ideal reconstitution of the nation Ezekiel provided that the city lands should be cultivated, and the city service should be fulfilled by Israelites selected from all tribes, who also should serve as a militia for its defence. The principle is a Divine principle which applies to the Church of Christ, the true and spiritual Jerusalem.

I. A UNIVERSAL SERVICE. As all the tribes of Israel joined in serving their country's metropolis, so in the Church of the Divine Redeemer no one is exempt from contribution to the common good. No one is so feeble or so obscure that his aid may be dispensed with. Every age and every land in which Christianity is professed furnishes a contingent to swell the army of the Lord.

II. A VOLUNTARY SERVICE. No other is acceptable to the Lord, who desires the heart, and who will accept no mechanical, unwilling labour. Cordiality is essential, even though power be slight and opportunity be limited. The professional and official element must always be regarded with anxiety and watchfulness, for the motive must be pure or else the work is marred.

III. A VARIED SERVICE. Each has his own special gift, and none should be undervalued, far less despised. Young and old, learned and lay, those in public and those in private life, all have their work to do, their part to fulfil. None can be spared. The Church is built upon its Divine Foundation through the labours of many minds, many voices, many hands. The one Master finds work for all.

> "He has his young men at the war,
> His little ones at home."

IV. A DIGNIFIED AND HONOURABLE SERVICE. To do anything at the bidding of such a Master, and for the progress of such a cause, may well be esteemed a privilege. Our Lord himself, by his incarnation, ministry, and sacrifice, has done more than could have been done in any other way to teach us the true dignity of service. If it be an honour to serve a great nation, a powerful king, how much higher is the honour of serving the Lord Jesus and those for whom he died!

V. A SERVICE WHICH IS LIBERALLY RECOMPENSED. Our Lord himself saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied. And when the promise is given to his faithful servants and followers, that they shall enter into the joy of their Lord, this is equivalent to an assurance that, sharing his toil, they shall also share his recompense. The safety and the growth, the prosperity and the glory, of the city is an abundant reward to the citizen who works with diligence and self-denial for its good. And the Christian has no greater joy than to witness the increase and the fame of the heavenly Jerusalem, and no brighter hope than to share his Master's throne.—T.

Ver. 35.—"*The Lord is there.*" A sublime close to a glorious book of prophecy. Ezekiel has had occasion to witness against Jerusalem, to upbraid the inhabitants of the city for their unfaithfulness to their God and to their privileges, to threaten chastisement and desolation, and to lament because his prediction has been fulfilled. But as he turns his vision away from the actual to the ideal, from the past to the future, from the Jerusalem that now is to the Jerusalem which is from above which is the mother of us all, from the Jewish state to the Church of God which that state foreshadowed, his mind is elevated with a sacred rapture, he beholds his brightest hopes fulfilled, God in very deed dwells with man—"the name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there."

I. TO DISPLAY HIS FAITHFULNESS TO THE CITY. The purposes and promises of God to man stand written indelibly upon the sacred page. Not one word that he has spoken shall fail; all shall be fulfilled. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." "The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but my faithfulness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy upon thee."

II. TO RULE AND GOVERN THE CITY. Not with the harshness of a despotic tyrant, but with the wisdom and justice of a beneficent Sovereign, does Jehovah bear sway over his redeemed and happy Church. He represses all rebellion and disorder, he pro-

mulgates ordinances, he inspires a cheerful obedience, he maintains that order which is the expression of loyalty and contentment.

III. TO PROTECT THE CITY. The Lord has taken his Zion under his own guardian care. The foes of the city may be mighty, but her Friend and Protector is mightier still. "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge." Fear cannot be, for danger cannot come where he is. He casts the shield of his almighty protection around his beloved. The walls of the city are salvation. The citizens may dwell in everlasting peace. No weapon that is formed against Zion shall prosper.

IV. TO DIGNIFY AND HONOUR THE CITY. The presence and the throne of the Eternal Majesty shed a lustre over the sacred metropolis. The seat of his government is by that very fact invested with an incomparable splendour and renown. The kings of the earth bring their honour into it. Every citizen shares in the dignity conferred by the throne of the great King.

V. TO ABIDE FOR EVER IN THE CITY. "The Lord is there." The unfaithfulness and defection of the Israelites were such that the glory of the God of Israel removed by the east gate from the temple and the city of Jerusalem. But the prophet beholds him return to his chosen dwelling-place. And as Jehovah takes up his abode in his Church, he utters the assurance, "I will never leave thee!"—T.

Vers. 8—14.—*Religion the nucleus of human life.* The spiritual training of men has been uppermost in God's mind. As a wise father trains his child, so God has been training us. From God earthly fathers have instinctively learnt their methods. With unparalleled patience God has been encouraging men to take the first step heavenward, then the next, and the next. The progress has been slow, often imperceptible; yet it has been continuous. Earth has been, and still will be, a great school-house, a religious university, and God's lesson-books are numberless. The outline of God's plan was sketched in Judæa, and the Hebrews (dull scholars as they were) have become teachers to the world.

I. RELIGION FILLS A CENTRAL PLACE IN A RENOVATED WORLD. "The sanctuary of the Lord shall be in the midst thereof." As the light of truth permeates men's minds, they will discover the supreme excellence of piety. Whatever will aid in the unfolding of their spiritual nature, whatever will promote increasing likeness to God, shall be most appreciated. Temporary good will sink into its proper place; will be appraised at its proper value. The outlook upon human destiny will be taken from a loftier elevation. Present possessions and enjoyments will be deemed, not final, but stepping-stones to higher things. And, from her central throne, Religion will radiate a benign influence over every interest men have in life. What the sun is to the solar system, or what the axle is to the wheel, or what the heart is to the human body, true religion will be among the concernments of our race.

II. RELIGION PROVIDES A GRADUATED SCALE OF EXCELLENCE. It produces states of purity, circle within circle. Central amongst the civilized nations lay the Hebrew people—a "holy nation—a peculiar people." Among the Hebrew tribes was one tribe set apart and hallowed for God. Within this tribe was selected a consecrated family, and within this family a consecrated man. So also within Jerusalem, the holy city, there was a central portion holier still; within this enclosure a court sacred to the priests, and within this holy place the holy of holies. Thus God leads us step by step from a lower to a loftier life, from one stage of holiness unto another. We aspire and make endeavour after a nobler style of life; and lo! when we have attained it (as in ascending the Alpine mountains) we discover heights of excellence still above us, more attractive yet. Kindlier methods than those God uses on our behalf it is impossible to employ, and his benevolent ambition is to raise us to his own level of life and joy.

III. RELIGION PROMOTES UNITY AMID DIVERSITY. "The sanctuary shall be in the midst of it." In other words, the several tribes of Israel were allotted their territory (in Ezekiel's ideal sketch) in relation to the holy place. Their vital connection with the sanctuary determined their connection with each other. The distinction between the tribes was not obliterated; it served some useful purpose; but this common relation to the sanctuary bound them each to each. If they had any separate interests as tribes, they had larger and more precious interests as a nation. The more they valued the sanctuary the stronger was the attachment to each other. The nearer they got to

God the less distance there was between each other. Among the citizens in Christ's kingdom diversities in minor things will continue. Diversity adds to beauty and to usefulness. Diversity of function and office, diversity in opinion and in taste, is lawful; yet amid all lawful diversity there runs a bond—a vital tie—of true unity. The members of the body are various, yet the body is one. In all God's works the same principle prevails.

IV. RELIGION BRINGS GOD EQUALLY NEAR TO ALL. As a fact in Jewish history, the tribe of Dan, being furthest removed from God's sanctuary, became more worldly, idolatrous, and godless than the other tribes. In the new settlement of things, in Ezekiel's vision, Dan shall have equal privilege with the rest. Type and parable will always lack some elements, which inhere in the substance. In the new kingdom God shall be within easy reach of all. Spiritual monopolies shall cease. Exclusive privilege has vanished. The devout heart in every tribe of men, or in any class of society, may find God always near. Distance from God is no longer geographical; it is moral. The slave and the pauper may have access to the great presence-chamber; the monarch, Jew or Gentile, may be barred out by their own unbelief. "With that man will I dwell, who is of an humble and a contrite heart."

V. RELIGION HAS AMPLE REWARD FOR FAITHFUL SERVICE. The sons of Zadok had remained faithful in a time of general apostasy. Divine approval may not have been openly or profusely expressed at the time. Yet generous reward was in store. Permanent honour and permanent advantage appear as the prolific fruit. They shall dwell nearer to God than others do. The entire nation shall serve them. Their deed shall reflect honour upon their father's name. The glory of their deed shall be perpetual, shall be world-wide. Their noble deed shall be the seed-corn for other deeds, and these again shall bear fruit in other lands. "The memory of the righteous is blessed."

VI. RELIGION IS SUPREMELY VALUABLE. Concerning this consecrated land it was decreed, "They shall not sell of it, neither exchange, nor alienate the firstfruits of the land." Nothing can compensate for the loss of religion. It is solid consolation that true piety is inalienable. No power on earth or in hell can rob us of our faith, or of our purity, or of our hope. It has the guarantee of almighty protection. You can no more alienate religion from a saint than you can alienate warmth from a sunbeam or saltness from the sea. "All that a man hath will he give for his life;" but the life of his spirit he accounts a thousandfold more precious yet. God's friendship is treasure which no arithmetic can express. All comparisons fail.—D.

Ver. 35.—*The apex of glory.* "The name of the city from that day shall be, The Lord is there." The final words of the prophet are golden, and deserve to be written in largest capitals. The architecture of the holy city is ideally complete; its finial shines out with immortal lustre. The city is baptized with a new name. Instead of "Jerusalem," it shall be "Jehovah-Shammah." Names are often labels which falsify the reality. A worthless mine may be named "El Dorado." A rotten ship may still bear the name *Impregnable.* But this name shall express the distinctive feature of the renovated city. Its glory shall not appear in chiselled marble and in burnished gold. In the new kingdom Christ shall set up, all the materials shall be spiritual, therefore impervious to decay. The charm and enchantment of the place will be this—"The Lord is there." It shall be nothing less than heaven in miniature. This illustrious name betokens—

I. SECURITY. Real security is never a visible quantity. It does not consist of granite walls and bastions, nor yet of approved artillery. The walls of Jericho were a poor defence. Jerusalem was better shielded by an unseen angel against the legions of Sennacherib, than by all its towers and citadels and gates. The host of Israel, when invading Canaan, was invincible because the Lord was among them. The presence of God is no mere fancy; 'tis a substantial reality. And if he be among us he brings with him all the qualities of Omnipotence. He who reared the Alps by a word, cannot he defend us? He who created with a breath this solid globe, cannot he protect? He is to us better than all "munitions of rocks." If he dwell in our midst, well may we triumphantly shout, "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our Refuge."

II. EMINENT RENOWN. A city is deemed garnished with honour if it be the residence

of a king. To have the presence of a monarch in their midst, to enjoy ever and anon his smile, is a privilege which all citizens prize. But how superior the renown of a city in which the King of heaven specially dwells! That he should stoop to sojourn among feeble mortals is an act of condescension peculiarly God-like. Compassion to the fallen is his delight, and he is satisfied if he can bestir in us holy ambitions. But what an honour! It is a difficult task to make it real to ourselves. His presence is the essential charm of heaven. He is its Light and its Life. Yet he deigns to dwell in an earthly empire! Will he not be equally the Life and Glory of the place? Will not this city acquire an eminence that shall cast into the shade all other renown? What other honour can we desire than this? Can ambition any higher climb? Is not this a climax of honour—"God with us"? Such a city becomes the metropolis of the world.

III. INTERNAL ORDER. If our King dwell in our midst, and if he be endowed with qualities of supreme wisdom and supreme righteousness, then the order of the city will be complete. Oppression of every sort and kind will be unknown. Upon every act of violence he will frown, and his frown will suffice. The inhabitants will instinctively study his comfort. The least danger of losing his presence will make them loyal. They will feel intolerable shame at any act that would distress his mind. His laws and regulations they know to be righteous through and through. His administration of rule is kindly and gentle. It is a joy to please him. Resistance can find no corner wherein to lurk, for "his eyes are in every place." To meet his gracious commands is not enough; they anticipate his every wish. For such a one service is a very banquet. At his feet they place heart and will.

IV. PROSPERITY. The presence of God among us brings real prosperity. From him, the eternal Fount of good, all substantial blessing flows. A hollow, transient prosperity may now and again be possessed without him; but it soon collapses,—it is only penalty disguised. The foes of God have at times had a flash of apparent success. But again men looked; it had vanished; the possessors were hurled into destruction; into smoke had they faded away. As the rising of the sun brings to us radiant day, so the smile of God alone gives success to agriculture, to commerce, to art, to legislation, and to literature. If God dwell among us, every interest in human life prospers. Industry reaps a full reward. Contentment reigns in every home. The very deserts bud and blossom like the rose.

V. HIGH COMMUNION ALSO IS ENJOYED. Our King does not clothe himself in silent, proud reserve. The very opposite; he is free of speech, affable, familiar. All the stores of knowledge he has he is ready to communicate. It is his purpose to make us wise, righteous, beneficent, pure. He dwells among us that we may commune with him and learn of him. We have known and felt the rich gains to character and to spiritual progress we have made by an hour or two of converse with the great and good among men. We were lifted up to a higher plane of life. But what language can express the gain of purity and spiritual excellence we obtain from converse with God? It is at times a glad experience; but earth is too poor in speech to tabulate the gain. And it is a gain that abides. A stupendous change passed over the eleven apostles through their familiar intercourse with Jesus, and we have often envied them the high advantage. Yet we are not excluded. We are invited to closer friendship, to more intimate converse with God. Fools we are that we do not use the privilege. By communion with God we become like God.

VI. EXQUISITE JOY. As superior joy pervades like a sunny atmosphere the scenes of heaven, so an instalment of the same joy fills the city on earth where God dwells. Joy springs out of the harmony between our souls and our surroundings. The highest joy is reached when our souls have perfect friendship with our Maker. Out of this intimate relationship with God comes friendly relationship with all holy beings. Now "all things work together for our good." Sorrow is but a preparative for a higher joy. The darkest cloud breaks into showers of blessing. Sorrow is ephemeral; joy is permanent. There are qualities in joy as well as varying measures. This joy is superlative —the cream of all joy. 'Tis the selfsame joy that dwells in Jehovah's heart. "My peace," said Jesus, "I give unto you." All other forms of gladness fade into nothingness in the presence of such joy as this. It is a well-spring of bliss which can never be exhausted, because God can never be exhausted. "In thy presence is fulness of joy." "Then shall I be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness."

"O blest the city, blest the land,
That yield them to this King's command!
O blest the heart set free from sin,
To which he deigns to enter in!"

D.

Vers. 1—20.—*Characteristics of the kingdom.* The kingdom of God, here symbolized "with such imperfect materials of thought and utterance as then lay within the prophet's reach," was to be one that has not yet been realized; but with the overthrow of many superstitions, the breaking down of much corruption, and the birth and growth (or the revival) of much Christian zeal, it may be said that this fair vision is being fulfilled—that the kingdom of Christ *is coming*, though it is far from having come. Among its characteristics, as it shall one day be, are—

I. GLORIOUS MAGNITUDE OF DIMENSION. (Ver. 10. See homily on ch. xlii. 15—20.)

II. ITS ADMIXTURE OF GRACE AND OF REWARD. The distribution of the land seems to have been without much (if any) regard to the meritoriousness of the tribes. Dan, which for its admission of idolatrous elements might have been last placed, comes first of all (ver. 1); on the other hand, marked preference is shown to "the priests . . . of the sons of Zadok, which have kept my charge, which went not astray," etc. (ver. 11). In the kingdom of Christ there is this same righteous and beneficent admixture. 1. It is of God's grace that all sinful souls are taken back into his favour, and are partakers of eternal life (Eph. ii. 5; Rom. vi. 23). 2. A large reward is offered to steadfastness and fidelity (Luke xxii. 28; Matt. xxv. 21; Rom. ii. 7; Rev. ii. 10).

III. COMMUNION AND CO-OPERATION. 1. The several tribes were so placed that they were as near to one another as could be; they were to be located side by side. And there was to be no barrier of sea or mountain wall, or even deep river between them; there was to be no hindrance to full communion (see vers. 1—8). 2. They were to unite in a common service. *All the tribes* were to take part in the service required for the city (ver. 19). When in the future the kingdom of God shall be what its Lord would have it, there shall be no separating walls keeping Churches and communities apart; there will be nothing standing in the way of fullest and happiest communion; differences of opinion or of organization will not be sources of division and separation; and while fellowship will be uninterrupted, co-operation for common ends will be common and complete,—all will serve together.

IV. BEAUTY. The aspect presented by this vision is one of symmetry; the sanctuary of the Lord in the midst of it (ver. 10); the sacred city around the sanctuary; and the twelve tribes around the city. Here is the beauty of a symmetrical arrangement. The beauty of the Church will not, indeed, be of this visible, material order. That is quite out of the question. It must necessarily be moral, spiritual, if at all. And that it will be. 1. It will be fair with *devotion*—constant, systematic, and (withal) spontaneous devotion (see next homily). 2. It will be adorned with an admirable *consistency* of behaviour, shunning the evil and pursuing the good which its Divine Master has either condemned or commended. 3. It will be beautiful with the spirit of *a true catholicity*, its members having a cordial regard and affection for one another, however they may differ in views and tastes. 4. It will be arrayed in the "beautiful garments" of *sympathy and helpfulness*.—C.

Vers. 31—34.—*God the Accessible One.* Admitting to the sacred city, in the midst of which was "the sanctuary of the Lord" (ver. 10), were twelve gates, three on each side of it, and bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Surely the significance of this arrangement was that the Divine Sovereign was always accessible to all his people; that he desired to be approached by them all in order that they might have fellowship with him, and that he might confer blessing upon them. In that kingdom, of which the vision is prophetic, the Divine Lord *is* accessible to all; and it is not only true that he *may* be approached by all who will seek him, but that it is his express, his strong desire that all his children *should* freely draw near to him and hold converse with him. God, as revealed and related to us in Jesus Christ, is accessible—

I. AT ALL TIMES. The gates into the kingdom, or into the near presence of God, shall "in no wise be shut," either day or night. There may be days and hours when

we may be offered unusual facilities for coming before God, but there is no day and there is no hour when we may not draw nigh unto him, when he is not willing and even desirous that we should pour our prayers or our praises into his ear.

II. FROM ALL DIRECTIONS. These gates looked in all directions—north, south, east, and west. From all the four quarters of the land the children of Israel were to draw near to the sacred city and to the more sacred sanctuary of the Lord. From all possible directions are we now to approach God. 1. All *geographical* directions. There is no sort of favouritism anywhere. As well be born in any one place under heaven as in any other. There is no Jerusalem, no Gerizim, no Mecca, no Benares, no Rome, in the kingdom of Christ.

> "Where'er we seek thee, thou art found,
> And every place is hallowed ground."

2. All *moral* directions. We may approach God from a great variety of spiritual standpoints. (1) From that of the burdened sinner seeking forgiveness and release. (2) From that of the son who has been painfully conscious of a long estrangement or a growing coldness, and who is anxious for full reconciliation and for close and happy, perhaps renewed, intercourse with his Father. (3) From that of a rejoicing spirit longing to bring his gladness in holy and happy gratitude to the altar of the Lord. (4) From that of the troubled and sorrowful soul seeking comfort of him who "raiseth up them that are bowed down." (5) From that of the seeker after righteousness, who is longing for more complete deliverance from evil and greater likeness to his Divine Leader, asking for the cleansing and renewing influences of the Spirit of God. (6) From that of the earnest worker in the vineyard, pleading for the effectuating power which alone will make his efforts to be crowned with a true success. But from whatsoever direction a man draws near to God he will find an open gate, a welcome, a response. But there is now one Name only that is inscribed. All entrance is—

III. THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. He is "the Door," and "no man cometh unto the Father but by him." By him both Jew and Gentile "have access unto the Father" (John x. 7; xiv. 6; Eph. ii. 18). Jesus Christ is our Mediator (1 Tim. ii. 5); he is the one Propitiation for our sins, having offered the one sacrifice for sins for ever (1 John ii. 2; Heb. ix. 26; x. 12). It is through him we come, and it is his Name we plead (John xvi. 23). He is the open Door, and whether we approach as sinners seeking reconciliation, or as children or friends seeking communion and blessing, we have constant admission to the ever-accessible Father of our spirits.—C.

Ver. 35.—*The presence of Christ in his Church.* Far more valuable to the Church of Jesus Christ is that Divine presence here promised than was the sacred Shechinah to the ancient people. The latter was only a mere *symbol*, once a year beheld by one man; but the former is a gracious *power*, to be appreciated and felt by every true Christian heart. "God is in the midst of her;" "The Lord is there," or (as Fairbairn would translate it) "The Lord is thither or thereupon;" the Lord from his temple looks towards (or upon) the city, and through the city to the whole land. It is the presence of its Divine Lord in the midst of the Church that is here indicated, and it may well be the concluding, as it is the crowning, thought which gives completeness to the prophet's vision.

I. HIS OBSERVANT PRESENCE. Jesus Christ is "with us always" (Matt. xxviii. 20); not in the body, but in the spirit; and his spiritual presence means *his observation of us*, his perfect knowledge of us all, his observation of our inner life and of our outward conduct, in the homes in which we live and in the different spheres in which we move, as well as when we are gathered together in his house or around his table. The near presence of our Lord is a thought which should preserve us from folly and from sin, which should urge us to duty and to kindness, which should sustain us in trouble and in loss.

II. HIS SYMPATHETIC PRESENCE. We have need of his presence at all times, but we realize our need more especially and more profoundly in the time of our affliction. It is then we want a Divine Friend and an all-powerful Deliverer. Man fails us then; he may be something or even much to us, but he leaves much to be desired. And to feel that "the Lord is there," in the trials of the household, in the anxieties of daily

duty, in the pressing problems and sacred struggles of the Church, is much to the mind of the devout. In Jesus Christ we have a present, sympathizing Friend, who enters into our sorrows, who goes down with us into the deepest waters through which we have to pass.

III. HIS ACTIVE PRESENCE. Our Lord is with us, not only observing us and feeling for us, but also *acting graciously upon us and through us.* 1. Illuminating our minds by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit. 2. Sustaining our spiritual life by Divine communications of power (see Eph. i. 19). 3. Responding to our devotion, accepting our praise and our adoration, hearing and answering our prayers. 4. Energizing and effectuating our work, enabling us to speak for him, and making our words to be "mighty to pull down" and to build up. The near presence of Christ should be the most powerful incentive to the pursuit of spiritual worth and to the execution of Christian enterprise.

PRACTICAL CONCLUSIONS. 1. *Do not indulge in a vain regret.* It would have been very pleasant to "see the Lord" as his apostles saw him, to look into his face, to hear his voice; and very honourable it would have been to minister to his necessities as they were permitted to do; but we can be, in fact and in truth, *as near to him* now as they were then; and still we listen to his word, and still we serve him most acceptably for inasmuch as we show kindness or render help to "one of these little ones of his," we do the same thing "unto him." 2. *Do not cherish an unfounded hope.* Many are the souls that lived long and died disappointed, expecting to have a *present visible* Saviour amongst them. We need not add to their number; the words of promise find another fulfilment than this. 3. *Realize the valuable truth,* the invaluable truth, that our Lord is with us now, loving us, caring for us, strengthening and comforting us, governing and using us, blessing us with all priceless blessings. 4. *Make the present heritage a foretaste of the future.* Live in such happy and holy consciousness of the presence of the Lord that it will only be a change of scene and sphere, not of spiritual condition, when we are citizens of that country where "God himself shall be with them," where "he who sits on the throne shall dwell among them," of that city which may well be called "Jehovah-Shammah," for "the Lord is there."—C.

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