THE PREACHER'S COMMENTARY

ON

GALATIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS,

AND

I. and II. THESSALONIANS

THE

Preacher's Complete Homiletical

COMMENTARY

ON THE

NEW TESTAMENT

(ON AN ORIGINAL PLAN)

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

BY

VARIOUS AUTHORS

New York
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1896

A

HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY

ON THE

EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE

TO THE

GALATIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, COLOSSIANS,

AND

I. AND II. THESSALONIANS

BY

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PREACHER'S HOMILETICAL COMMENTARY.

GALATIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

Character of the Galatians.—These people were of Celtic descent. They were the relics of a Gaulish invasion which swept over South-eastern Europe in the early part of the third century before Christ and poured into Asia Minor. Here the Celtic tribes maintained themselves in independence under their native princes, until a hundred years later they were subdued by the Romans. Their country now formed a province of the empire. They had retained much of their ancient language and manners; at the same time they readily acquired Greek culture, and were superior to their neighbours in intelligence. Jews had settled among them in considerable numbers, and had prepared the way of the gospel; it was through their influence that the Judaistic agitation took so strong a hold of the Galatian Churches. The epistle implies that its readers generally were acquainted with the Old Testament and with Hebrew history, and that they took a lively interest in the affairs of the Churches of Jerusalem and Antioch. None of the New Testament Churches possesses a more strongly marked character. They exhibit the well-known traits of the Celtic nature. They were generous, impulsive, vehement in feeling and language; but vain, fickle, and quarrelsome. Cæsar wrote: "The infirmity of the Gauls is that they are fickle in their resolves, fond of change, and not to be trusted"; and by Thierry they are characterised thus: "Frank, impetuous, impressible, eminently intelligent, but at the same time extremely changeable, inconstant, fond of show, perpetually quarrelling, the fruit of excessive vanity." Eight of the fifteen works of the

flesh enumerated in chap. v. 20, 21 are sins of *strife*. They could hardly be restrained from "biting and devouring one another" (v. 15). Like their kinsmen at this time in the west of Europe, they were prone to revellings and drunkenness. They had probably a natural bent toward a scenic and ritualistic type of religion, which made the spirituality of the gospel pall upon their taste and gave to the teaching of the Judaisers its fatal bewitchment.

The authorship of the epistle.—That it was written by St. Paul has never been seriously doubted. His authorship is upheld by the unanimous testimony of the ancient Church. Allusions and indirect citations are found in the writings of the apostolic Fathers—Clement, Ignatius, Polycarp, and Justin Martyr, or whoever wrote the *Oratio ad Græcos*. The internal evidence of Pauline authorship is conclusive by allusions to the history and by the self-portrayal of the writer's character. No forger ever made an imitation in which were so many secret threads of similarity, which bore such a stamp of originality, or in which the character, the passion, the mode of thought and reasoning, were so naturally represented. The apostle's mental characteristics are indelibly impressed on the letter.

The time of writing the epistle.—Lightfoot, in disagreement from most earlier interpreters, maintained that this epistle was written between 2 Corinthians and Romans—that is, during the latter part of Paul's journey in Macedonia, or the earlier part of his sojourn at Corinth, towards the close of the year 57 or 58 A.D. Dr. Beet comes to the same conclusion. There is nothing in the letter itself to fix definitely either the place or time of its composition. From chap. i. 9, iv. 13, v. 3 we gather that St. Paul had now been in Galatia twice; the epistle was therefore subsequent to the journey which he took across Asia Minor in setting out on his third missionary tour (Acts xviii. 22—xix. 1). All students are agreed that it belongs to the period of the legalist controversy and to the second group of the epistles. On every account one is inclined to refer the letter to the last rather than to an earlier period of the third missionary tour. Comparison with the other epistles of the group raises this probability almost to a certainty, and enables us to fix the date and occasion of this letter with confidence.

The purpose and analysis of the epistle.—It is intensely polemical. It is a controversial pamphlet rather than an ordinary letter. The matter of dispute is twofold: 1. Paul's apostleship; and 2. The nature of the gospel and the sufficiency of faith in Christ for full salvation. This gives the order of the first two and main parts of the epistle. A third section is added of a moral and hortatory nature. The contents of the epistle may be thus analysed:—

I. INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS.—1. The apostolic salutation (i. 1-5). 2. The Galatians' defection (i. 6-10).

II. PERSONAL APOLOGIA: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL RETROSPECT.—The apostle's teaching derived from God and not man, as proved by the circumstances of: 1. His education (i. 13, 14). 2. His conversion (i. 15-17). 3. His intercourse

with the other apostles (i. 18-24, ii. 1-10). 4. His conduct in the controversy with Peter at Antioch (ii. 11-14). The subject of which controversy was the supersession of the law by Christ (ii. 15-21).

III. DOGMATIC APOLOGIA: INFERIORITY OF JUDAISM, OR LEGAL CHRISTIANITY, TO THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH.—1. The Galatians bewitched into retrogression from a spiritual system into a carnal system (iii. 1-5). 2. Abraham himself a witness to the efficacy of faith (iii. 6-9). 3. Faith in Christ alone removes the curse which the law entails (iii. 10-14). 4. The validity of the promise unaffected by the law (iii. 15-18). 5. Special pædagogic function of the law (iii. 19-29). 6. The law a state of tutelage (iv. 1-7). 7. Meanness and barrenness of mere ritualism (iv. 8-11). 8. The past zeal of the Galatians contrasted with their present coldness (iv. 12-20). 9. The allegory of Isaac and Ishmael (iv. 21-31).

IV. HORTATORY APPLICATION OF THE FOREGOING.—1. Christian liberty excludes Judaism (v. 1-6). 2. The Judaising intruders (v. 7-12). 3. Liberty not licence, but love (v. 13-15). 4. The works of the flesh and of the Spirit (v. 16-26). 5. The duty of sympathy (vi. 1-5). 6. The duty of liberality (vi. 6-10).

V. AUTOGRAPH CONCLUSION.—1. The Judaisers' motive (vi. 12, 13). 2. The apostle's motive (vi. 14, 15). 3. His parting benediction and claim to be freed from further annoyance (vi. 16-18). (*Findlay* and *Sanday.*)

CHAPTER I.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Paul, an apostle.**—He puts his own name and apostleship prominent, because his apostolic commission needs to be vindicated against deniers of it. **Not of,** or from, **men, but by**, or from, **Jesus Christ and God the Father.** The divine source of his apostleship is emphatically stated, as also the infallible authority for the gospel he taught.

Ver. 6. **I marvel that ye are so soon removed.**—So quickly removed; not so soon after your conversion, or soon after I left you, but so soon after the temptation came; so readily and with such little persuasion (cf. v. 7-9). It is the fickleness of the Galatians the apostle deplores. An early backsliding, such as the contrary view assumes, would not have been matter of so great wonder as if it had taken place later.

Vers. 8, 9. **Any other gospel.**—The apostle is here asserting the oneness, the integrity of his gospel. It will not brook a rival. It will not suffer any foreign admixture. **Let him be accursed.**—Devoted to the punishment his audacity merits. In its spiritual application the word denotes the state of one who is alienated from God by sin.

Ver. 11. **Not after man.**—Not according to man; not influenced by mere human considerations, as it would be if it were of human origin.

Ver. 12. **But by the revelation of Jesus Christ.**—Probably this took place during the three years, in part of which the apostle sojourned in Arabia (vers. 17, 18), in the vicinity of the scene of the giving of the law: a fit place for such a revelation of the gospel of grace which supersedes the ceremonial law. Though he had received no instruction from the apostles, but from the Holy Ghost, yet when he met them his gospel exactly agreed with theirs.

Ver. 14. **Exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.**—St. Paul seems to have belonged to the extreme party of the Pharisees (Acts xxii. 3, xxiii. 7, xxvi. 5; Phil. iii. 5, 6), whose pride it was to call themselves "zealots of the law, zealots of God." A portion of these extreme partisans, forming into a separate sect under Judas of Galilee, took the name of zealots *par excellence*, and distinguished themselves by their furious opposition to the Romans.

Ver. 16. **To reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him.**—The revealing of His Son by me to the Gentiles was impossible, unless He had first revealed His Son in me; at first on my conversion, but especially at the subsequent revelation from Jesus Christ (ver. 12), whereby I learnt the gospel's independence of the Mosaic law.

Ver. 24. **They glorified God in me.**—He does not say, adds Chrysostom, they marvelled at me, they praised me, they were struck with admiration of me, but he attributes all to grace. They glorified God in me. How different, he implies to the Galatians, their spirit from yours.

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

Apostolic Credentials.

I. **That apostolic credentials claim distinctively divine authority.**—"Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father" (ver. 1). It must have been a painful moment when Paul first became aware that spurious teachers questioned the validity of his apostolic call, and a still more painful disappointment when he discovered his Galatian converts so readily gave credence to those who maligned him. His fears were roused, not so much

for his personal reputation as for the injury to the religious life of his converts if they cherished suspicions as to the divine character of the truth they had been taught. The mischief must be dealt with at once. He boldly and emphatically declared that his commission was direct from God, and bore the same divine stamp as that of the other apostles, whose authority even the false teachers had not the temerity to deny. It has ever been the *rôle* of the subtle adversary of man to strive to eliminate the divine element from the truth and drag it down to a common human level. Truth then loses its stability, begins to move in a flux of confused human opinions, and the soul is plunged into bewilderment and doubt. Whatever tends to vitiate the truth brings peril to the peace and upward progress of the soul. The power of the teacher increases with an ever-deepening conviction of the divine authority of his message.

II. **That apostolic credentials recognise the oneness of the Christian brotherhood.**—"And all the brethren which are with me" (ver. 2). Here is the indication that St. Paul was not unduly solicitous about his personal reputation. While insisting upon the unquestioned divine source of his apostleship, he does not arrogate a haughty superiority over his brethren. He is one with them in Christ, in the belief of and fidelity to the truth, in the arduous labours of pioneer work, in building up and consolidating the Church, and unites them with himself in his Christian greeting. It is the sublime aim of the gospel to promote universal brotherhood by bringing men into spiritual union with Christ, the Elder Brother. Christ is the unifying force of redeemed humanity. Ecclesiastical ranks are largely human expedients, necessary for maintaining order and discipline. The great Head of the Church has promulgated the unchallengeable law of religious equality: "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren" (Matt. xxiii. 8).

III. **That apostolic credentials justify the use of a sublime and comprehensive greeting.**—"Grace be to you and peace," etc. (ver. 3). A greeting like this from some lips would be fulsome, or at the best mere exaggerated politeness. But coming from one who was in constant communion with the Source of the blessings desired, and from which Source he received his call to the apostleship, it is at once dignified, large-hearted, and genuine. *Grace* and *peace* are inclusive of the best blessings Heaven can bestow or man receive. They are divine in their origin and nature—"from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ." Grace is the spontaneous outflow of divine love in the redemption of the race, and is the more precious because unmerited; and peace is the conscious experience of that grace in the believing soul—peace from outward dissension and inward fret, peace of conscience, peace with God and man. The blessings the apostle desires God is ever eager to bestow. "Filling up our time with and for God is the way," said David Brainerd, "to rise up and lie down in peace. I longed that my life might be filled up with fervency and activity in the things of God. Oh the peace, composure, and God-like serenity of such a frame! Heaven must differ from this only in degree, not in kind."

IV. **That apostolic credentials are evident in the clear statement of the great principles of the gospel salvation.**—"Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us," etc. (vers. 4, 5). In these words we have a suggestive epitome of the whole gospel. Man is delivered from sin and from the present evil age by the self-sacrifice of Jesus; and this method is "according to the will of God," and brings unceasing glory to His name. This is the gospel in a nutshell, and involves all the grand principles of redemption the apostle was commissioned to declare, and which he develops more clearly in the course of this epistle. Deliverance is divinely provided, irrespective of human effort or merit. The Galatians in seeking to return to legal bondage ignored the root principles of the gospel and imperilled their salvation. The apostle vindicated

the credentials of his high office by faithful remonstrance and plain authoritative statement of the truth divinely revealed to him. It is a mark of high intellectual power to make the greatest truths clear to the humblest mind. Christian teaching has all the more weight when associated with irreproachable moral character.

Lessons.—1. *God should be gratefully recognised as the Giver of all good.* 2. *The special endowments of one are for the benefit of all.* 3. *It is a solemn responsibility to be entrusted with the preaching of the gospel.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. *The Power of the Gospel.*—1. Free grace doth often light upon the most unworthy, not only by giving salvation to themselves, but making them instrumental for the kingdom of Christ and bringing about the salvation of others. 2. Faithful and called ministers of Christ are to be so far from cowardly ceding, or heartless fainting under the bold, bitter, and unjust aspersions of those who question their calling, and thereby weaken their authority and render the truth of their doctrine doubtsome, that they ought the more to avow their calling against all who question it. 3. The office of an apostle had this peculiar to itself, that the designation was not mediately by the election and suffrages of men, as in the calling of ordinary office-bearers, but immediately from God, so that the function of the apostles ceased with them, and did not pass by succession to a pope or any other. 4. The false apostles, that they might shake the truth preached by Paul and establish their own contrary error, alleged that he was no lawful apostle. This Paul refutes by showing he was called by Christ after He was raised from the dead and had taken possession of His kingdom, so that his calling had at least no less dignity and glory in it than if he had been called by Christ when He was on earth.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 2. *The Church a Witness.*—1. The more they are whom God maketh use of to hold out the beauty of truth that we may embrace and follow it, or the deformity and danger of error that we may fly from and hate it, we are the more to take heed how we reject or embrace what is pressed upon us, as there will be the more to bear witness of our guilt and subscribe to the equity of God's judgment if we obey not. 2. We are not so to stumble at the many sinful failings which may be in Churches, as to unchurch them, by denying them to be a Church, or to separate from them, if their error be not contrary to fundamental truths, or if they err from human frailty, and not obstinately and avowedly.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 3. *Christian Salutation.*—1. God's gracious favour and goodwill is to be sought by us in the first place, whether for ourselves or others, that being a discriminating mercy betwixt the godly and the wicked. 2. Peace is to be sought after grace, and not to be expected before it. Peace without grace is no peace. There can be no peace with God or His creatures, nor sanctified prosperity, except through Jesus Christ we lay hold on God's favour and grace. 3. Grace and peace we cannot acquire by our own industry or pains. They come from God, are to be sought from Him, and His blessing is more to be depended on than our own wisdom or diligence. 4. They to whom grace and peace belong are such as acknowledge Christ to be their Lord to command and rule them, and yield subjection to Him in their heart and life.—*Ibid.*

Grace and Peace.

I. **Grace** is not any gift in man, but is God's and in God. It signifies His gracious favour and goodwill, whereby He is well pleased with us in Christ.

II. **Peace** is a gift not in God, but in us. 1. Peace of conscience—a quietness and tranquillity of mind arising from a sense of reconciliation with God. 2. Peace with the creatures —with angels, with the godly, with our enemies. 3. Prosperity and good success.

III. Whereas Paul begins his prayer with grace we learn that **grace in God is the cause of all good things in us.**

IV. The chief things to be sought after are **the favour of God in Christ and the peace of a good conscience.**

V. As grace and peace are joined we learn that **peace without grace is no peace.**—*Perkins.*

Vers. 4, 5. *The Unselfishness of Jesus.*

I. **Prompting self-surrender.**—"Who gave Himself."

II. **His self-surrender was an unmerited and unlooked-for expiation.**—"For our sins."

III. **Creates the hope and possibility of immediate salvation.**—"That He might deliver us from this present evil world."

IV. **Was a suggestive revelation of the divine character.**—"According to the will of God and our Father."

V. **Should evoke the spirit of grateful praise.**—"To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Ver. 4. *Christ our Sacrifice.*

I. Whereas Christ is the giver of Himself it follows that **His death and sacrifice were voluntary.**

II. Therefore **all merit and satisfaction for sin are reduced to the person of Christ**, and there are no human satisfactions for sin, nor meritorious works done by us.

III. **Christ our sacrifice works love in us.**—We must in mind and meditation come to the cross of Christ. 1. The consideration of His endless pains for our sins must breed in us a godly sorrow. If He sorrowed for them, much more must we. 2. This knowledge is the beginning of amendment of life. 3. Is the foundation of comfort in them that truly turn to Christ.

IV. **Christ gave Himself that He might deliver us from this evil world.** —1. We must be grieved at the wickedness of the world. 2. We must not fashion ourselves to the wicked lives of the men of this world. 3. Seeing we are taken out of this world, our dwelling must be in heaven.—*Perkins.*

The Gift of Christ.

I. **The gift.**—"He gave Himself." Regard Christ: 1. As the object of every prophecy. 2. The substance of every type and shadow. 3. The subject of every promise. 4. He was qualified for the work of redemption. Divine, human, spotless.

II. **Christ's marvellous act.**—"He gave Himself for our sins." 1. To what He gave Himself. To all the privations and sorrows of human life, to obscurity and indigence, to scorn and infamy, to pain and anguish, to an ignominious and painful death. 2. The purpose for which He gave Himself. To deliver us from sin's curse, defilement, dominion, and from the effects of sin in this world and in eternity.

III. **The design of Christ's offering** —"That He might deliver us from the present evil world." From its evil practices, its spirit, from attachment to it, and from the condemnation to which it will be subjected.

IV. **Christ's offering was according to the will of God.**—1. It was the will of God we should be saved. 2. Christ was the appointed agent. 3. The sacrifice of Christ was voluntary.—*Helps.*

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

The One Gospel.

I. **Is an introduction into the grace of Christ.**—"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ" (ver. 6). The

true gospel is the emphatic call of God to man to participate and revel in the grace of Christ as the element and the only means by which his salvation can be secured. The grace of Christ, with its persuasive gentleness and vast redemptive resources, is in vivid contrast to the grim formalism and impossible demands of the yoke of bondage into which the Galatians were being so foolishly seduced. There is only one gospel that can introduce the soul into the midst of saving influences and bring it into contact with the living Christ. This one fact differentiates the gospel from all mere human methods, and gives it a unique character as the only remedial agency in dealing with human sin and sorrow.

II. **The perversion of the one gospel is not a gospel.**—"Unto another gospel which is not another" (vers. 6, 7).

1. *It is a caricature of the true gospel.*—"And would pervert the gospel of Christ" (ver. 7). The perversion is not in the one gospel, which is impossible of perversion (for truth is an incorruptible unity), but in the mind of the false teacher. He distorts and misrepresents the true gospel by importing into it his own corrupt philosophy, as the wolf did with Baron Munchausen's horse. Beginning at the tail, it ate its way into the body of the horse, until the baron drove the wolf home harnessed in the skin of the horse. The gospel has suffered more from the subtle infusion of human errors than from the open opposition of its most violent enemies.

2. *It occasions distraction of mind.*—"There be some that trouble you" (ver. 7). A perverted gospel works the greatest havoc among young converts. They are assailed before they reach the stage of matured stability. Their half-formed conceptions of truth are confused with specious ideas, attractive by their novelty, and mischief is wrought which in many cases is a lifelong injury. The spirit that aims at polluting a young beginner in the way of righteousness is worse than reckless; it is diabolical.

III. **The propagator of a perverted gospel incurs an awful malediction.**—"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel, . . . let him be accursed" (vers. 8, 9). Let him be devoted to destruction, as one hateful to God and an enemy of the truth. The word denotes the condition of one alienated from God by persistent sin. He not only rejects the truth himself, but deliberately plots the ruin of others. He reaps the fruit of his own sowing. It is impossible to do wrong without suffering. The greater the wrong-doing, the more signal is the consequent punishment. All perversions of truth are fruitful in moral disasters. It is a mad, suicidal act for man to fight against God.

Lessons.—1. *There can be but one true and infallible gospel.* 2. *The best human method for moral reformation is but a caricature of the true.* 3. *The false teacher will not escape punishment.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 6, 7. *Remonstrance with Revolters against the Gospel.*

I. **The apostle reproves with meekness and tenderness of heart.**

II. **He frames his reproof with great wariness and circumspection.**—He says not, ye of yourselves do remove to another gospel, but ye are removed. He blames them but in part, and lays the principal blame on others.

III. **The revolt was a departure from the calling to the grace of Christ.**—1. They were soon carried away. This shows the lightness and inconstancy of man's nature, especially in religion. The multitude of people are like wax, and are fit to take the stamp and impression of any religion; and it is the law of the land that makes the most embrace the gospel, and not conscience. 2. That we may constantly persevere in the profession of the true faith we must receive the gospel simply for itself. 3. We must

be renewed in the spirit of our minds and suffer no by-corners in our hearts. 4. We must not only be hearers but doers of the word in the principal duties to be practised.

IV. The Galatians revolt to **another gospel, compounded of Christ and the works of the law.**—Here we see the curious niceness and daintiness of man's nature that cannot be content with the good things of God unless they be framed to our minds. If they please us for a time, they do not please us long, but we must have new things. The apostle shows that, though it be another gospel in the estimation of the false teachers, it is not another, but a subversion of the gospel of Christ. There is but one gospel, one in number, and no more. There is but one way of salvation by Christ, whereby all are to be saved from the beginning of the world to the end.

V. **The apostle charges the authors of this revolt with two crimes.**—1. They trouble the Galatians, not only because they make divisions, but because they trouble their consciences settled in the gospel of Christ. 2. They overthrow the gospel of Christ. They did not teach a doctrine flat contrary. They maintained the gospel in word, and put an addition to it of their own out of the law—salvation by works. They perverted and turned upside-down the gospel of Christ.—*Perkins.*

The Perversion of Truth—

I. **Supplants the gospel with a valueless imitation.**—"Another gospel which is not another."

II. **Is contrary to the divine purpose.**—"From Him that called you into the grace of Christ."

III. **Creates a gulf between the soul and God.**—"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him."

IV. **Unsettles the faith of new converts.**—"There be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ."

Ver. 6. *Disappointed Hopes in Christian Work.*—1. It is the duty of Christian ministers, not only to hold out the pure truth of the gospel, but to defend it by convincing gainsayers and reproving solidly those who are carried away with contrary errors. 2. Ministers in all their reproofs are to use much wariness and circumspection, not omitting any circumstance which may justly extenuate the sin or furnish ground of hope of amendment. Hereby the bitter potion of a medicinal reproof is much sweetened and the guilty patient allured to the more thorough receiving of it. 3. The most quick-sighted may be deceived and disappointed in their expectation of good things from some eminent professors, and so may readily fall short of their hope. 4. As the dangerous consequences which follow upon error ought to be presented unto people that they may fly from it, so there are some errors in doctrine which do no less separate from God than profanity of life doth, of which errors this is one —the maintaining of justification by works. 5. It is ordinary for seducers to usher in their errors by some excellent designations, as of new lights, a more pure gospel way, and what not, as here they designate their error by the name of another gospel.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 7. *The Inviolable Unity of the Gospel.*—1. There is but one gospel, one in number and no more, and but one way to salvation, which is by faith. 2. The effect of error is to trouble the Church's peace; peace among themselves, the patrons of error being zealous of nothing so much as to gain many followers, to attain which they scruple not to make woeful rents and deplorable schisms; inward peace of conscience, while some are perplexed and anxious what to choose and refuse until they question all truth, and others to embrace error for truth and so ground their peace on an unsure foundation. 3. The doctrine which maintains that justification is partly by Christ and partly by the merit of good works is a perverting

and total overturning of the gospel, in so far as it contradicts the main scope of the gospel, which is to exalt Christ as our complete Saviour, Mediator, and Ransom, and not in part only.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 8. *The Inviolability of Christianity.*

I. **The import and construction of the gospel cannot be vague and indeterminate.**—The character of the gospel was alleged to be its truth. This was, to the sophists of that era, a strange and novel pretension. To require faith to a testimony only so far as conformable to fact, only so far as supported by evidence, appeared to them a startling affectation. In the fixed character we recognise the true perfection of the gospel. It is the same through all ages, not changing to every touch and varying beneath every eye, but unfolding the same features and producing the same effects. Unless there was this invariableness in the Christian system, if a fixed determination of its purport is impossible, we should be at a loss in what manner to follow the conduct and imbibe the spirit of the early Christians. Those lights and examples of the Church would only ensnare us into a mien and attitude ridiculous as profane. It would be the dwarf attempting to bare a giant's arm, a wayfaring man aspiring to a prophet's vision. The truth as it is in Jesus is contained in that word which is the truth itself; there it is laid up as in a casket and hallowed as in a shrine. No change can pass upon it. It bears the character of its first perfection. Like the manna and the rod in the recess of the Ark, it is the incorruptible bread of heaven, it is the ever-living instrument of might, without an altered form or superseded virtue.

II. **Its divine origin and authority cannot be controverted.**—The history of Saul of Tarsus has often been cited with happy success in confirmation of Christianity. 1. What must have been the strength and satisfaction of conviction entertained by the writer! The conviction has to do with facts. It pertains to no favourite theory, no abstract science, but occurrences which he had proved by sensible observation and perfect consciousness. Wonders had teemed around him; but his own transformation was the most signal wonder of all. Nothing without him could equal what he discerned within. 2. As we estimate the measure and force of his convictions, inquire what weight and credibility should be allowed them. Put his conduct to any rack, his design to any analysis, and then determine whether we are not safe where he is undaunted, whether we may not decide for that on which he perils all, whether the anathema which he dares pronounce does not throw around us the safeguard of a divine benediction.

III. **Its efficacy cannot be denied.**—It was not called into operation until numberless expedients of man had been frustrated. Philosophy, rhetoric, art, were joined to superstitions, radicated into all habits and vices of mankind. The very ruins which survive the fall of polytheism—the frieze with its mythological tale, the column yet soaring with inimitable majesty, the statue breathing an air of divinity—recall the fascinations which it once might boast and of the auxiliaries it could command. Yet these were but the decorations of selfishness most indecently avowed, of licentiousness most brutally incontinent, of war the most wantonly bloody, of slavery the most barbarously oppressive. And Christianity subverted these foundations of iniquity; and yet so all-penetrating is its energy, that it did not so much smite them as that they sank away before it. It reaches the human will and renews the human heart. And a thousand blessings which may at first appear derived from an independent source are really poured forth from this.

IV. **The authority and force of the present dispensation of divine truth cannot be superseded.**—It is final. In it He hath spoken whose voice shall be heard no more until it "shake not the

earth only but also heaven." No other sensible manifestation can be given, the doctrine is not to be simplified, the ritual is not to be defined to any further extent, nothing more will be vouchsafed to augment its blessings or ratify its credentials. We possess the true light, the perfect gift, the brightest illumination, the costliest boon. Such a dispensation, constituted to be co-existent with all future time, must resist every view which would impress a new form or foist a strange nature upon it.

V. **No circumstance or agency can endanger the existence and stability of the Christian revelation.**—When the security of the gospel is to be most confidently predicted and most strongly ascertained, supernatural power is restrained—a curse encloses it round about, a "flaming sword turning every way guards this tree of life." It shall endure coevally with man. Feeble are our present thoughts, confused our perceptions; we see everything as from behind a cloud and in a disproportion. Our convictions are more like conjectures and our speculations dreams. But we shall soon emerge from this state of crude fancies and immature ideas. Worthy sentiments and feelings will fill up our souls. Each view shall be as a ray of light striking its object, and each song the very echo of its theme. Then shall we adequately understand why apostles kindled into indignation and shook with horror at the idea of "another gospel," and why even angels themselves must have been accursed had it been possible for them to have divulged it.—*R. W. Hamilton.*

A Supernatural Revelation.—There can be no doubt whatever, as a matter of historic fact, that the apostle Paul claimed to have received direct revelation from heaven. He is so certain of that revelation that he warns the Galatians against being enticed by any apparent evidence to doubt it. It would be impossible to express a stronger, a more deliberate, and a more solemn conviction that he had received a supernatural communication of the will of God.—*Dr. Wace, Bampton Lectures.*

The Best Authority to be obeyed.—A dispute having arisen on some question of ecclesiastical discipline and ritual, King Oswi summoned in 664 a great council at Whitby. The one set of disputants appealed to the authority of Columba, the other to that of St. Peter "You own," cried the puzzled king to Colman, "that Christ gave to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven: has He given such power to Columba?" The bishop could but answer, No. "Then I will obey the porter of heaven," said Oswi, "lest when I reach its gates he who has the keys in his keeping turn his back on me, and there be none to open."

Latitudinarianism.—Referring to Erasmus's temporising policy in the Reformation, Froude says: "The question of questions is, what all this latitudinarian philosophising, this cultivated epicurean gracefulness, would have come to if left to itself, or rather, what was the effect which it was inevitably producing? If you wish to remove an old building without bringing it in ruin about your ears, you must begin at the top, remove the stones gradually downwards, and touch the foundation last. But latitudinarianism loosens the elementary principles of theology. It destroys the premises on which the system rests. It would beg the question to say that this would in itself have been undesirable; but the practical effect of it, as the world then stood, would have been only to make the educated into infidels, and to leave the multitude to a convenient but debasing superstition."

Ver. 9. *The True Gospel to be preached and believed.*

I. The repetition of these words by Paul **signify that he had not spoken rashly but advisedly,** whatsoever he had said before.

II. **That the point delivered is an infallible truth of God.**

III. **That we may observe and remember what he had said as the foundation of our religion**—that the doctrine of the apostles is the only infallible truth of God, against which we may not listen to Fathers, Councils, or to the very angels of God.

IV. They are accursed **who teach otherwise than the Galatians had received.**—As Paul preached the gospel of Christ, so the Galatians received it. The great fault of our times is that whereas the gospel is preached it is not accordingly received. Many have no care to know it; and they who know it give not unto it the assent of faith, but only hold it in opinion.—*Perkins.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 10—12.

The Superhuman Origin of the Gospel.

I. **The gospel is not constructed on human principles.**—"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man" (ver. 11). Its character is such as the human mind would never have conceived. When it was first proclaimed it was the puzzle of the religious and the ridicule of the learned—"unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." It is wholly opposed to the drift of human tendencies. Its supreme aim is to effect a complete transformation of human nature. Not to destroy that nature, but to renew, elevate, and sublimate it. By its principle of self-sacrificing love, its insistence of the essential oneness of the race, its methods in dealing with the world's evils, its lofty morality, and its uncompromising claims of superiority the gospel transcends all the efforts of human ingenuity. Augustine, the father of Western theology in the fifth century, divided the human race into two classes —the one who lived according to man and the other who lived according to God. The gospel is the only revelation that teaches men how to live according to God.

II. **The gospel does not pander to human tastes.**—"For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (ver. 10). The adversaries of the apostle insinuated that he was a trimmer, observing the law among the Jews and yet persuading the Gentiles to renounce it; becoming all things to all men that he might form a party of his own. Such an insinuation was based on an utter misconception of the gospel. So far from flattering, Paul preached a gospel that humbled men, demanding repentance and reform. It often came in collision with popular tastes and opinions; and though the apostle was a man of broad views and sympathies, he was ever the faithful and uncompromising servant of Christ. Public opinion may be hugely mistaken, and there is danger of over-estimating its importance. It is the lofty function of the preacher to create a healthy public opinion and Christianise it, and he can do this only by a scrupulous and constant representation of the mind of Christ, his divine Master. The wise Phocion was so sensible how dangerous it was to be touched with what the multitude approved that upon a general acclamation made when he was making an oration he turned to an intelligent friend and asked in a surprised manner, "What slip have I made?" George Macdonald once said, "When one has learned to seek the honour that cometh from God only, he will take the withholding of the honour that cometh by man very lightly indeed."

III. **The gospel has a distinctly superhuman origin.**—"For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (ver. 12). Paul's reception of the gospel was not only a revelation of Christ *to* him, but at the same time a revelation of Christ *in* him. The human vehicle was spiritually prepared for the reception and understanding of the divine

message; and this moral transformation not only convinced him of the superhuman character of the gospel, but also empowered him with authority to declare it. The gospel carries with it the self-evidencing force of its divine origin in its effect upon both preacher and hearer. It is still an enigma to the mere intellectual student; only as it is received into the inmost soul, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, is its true nature apprehended and enjoyed.

Lessons.—1. *Man everywhere is in dire need of the gospel.* 2. *The human mind is incapable of constructing a saving gospel.* 3. *The gospel is inefficacious till it is received as a divine gift.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 10. *Fidelity in the Ministry.*

I. **The proper nature of the ministry is not the word or doctrine of man but of God.**—Ministers are taught to handle their doctrine with modesty and humility, without ostentation, with reverence, and with a consideration of the majesty of God, whose doctrine it is they utter.

II. **The dispensing of the word must not be for the pleasing of men but God.**—Ministers must not apply and fashion their doctrine to the affections, humours, and dispositions of men, but keep a good conscience and do their office.

III. **If we seek to please men we cannot be the servants of God.**—He that would be a faithful minister of the gospel must deny the pride of his heart, be emptied of ambition, and set himself wholly to seek the glory of God in his calling.—*Perkins.*

The Servant of Christ.

I. **There is nothing dishonourable in the idea of a servant absolutely considered.**—On the contrary, there may be much in it that is noble and venerable. Nothing can be more contemptible than an affectation of independence which resents or is ashamed of a servant's name. And many who despise servants should be told that they themselves are so worthless that nobody would think of honouring them with hiring them for service. It was Christ's honour that His Father so employed Him for the work of our salvation, and said, "Behold My Servant, whom I have chosen"; and the highest honour of the preachers of the gospel is that they are the ministers, that is, the servants, both of Christ and His Church. There are cases, no doubt, in which servitude is degrading. The master may be infamous; though even then the servant's condition is not dishonourable, unless he be employed in infamous work. Many servants have wrought out most honourable names for themselves in doing good work under bad masters. Matthew Henry has said well that there is nothing mean but sin, and with such meanness and dishonour is every man affected who is not a servant of Christ. There is for us all the choice of only two conditions; there is not a third and neutral one. The alternative is a servant of the Son of God or a slave of sin. It may not be of sin in its most hideous forms, in the form in which it tyrannises over the drunkard, the lewd man, or the ambitious, but even in its milder and less offensive form, when it may reign only with the power which it exercises over the worshipper of wealth or of human applause; still, it is a degrading vassalage. Let no worldly man, then, affect to pity or scorn the disciple of the gospel as being one whom superstition enslaves, though it were admitted to be a slavery; he himself labours under one infinitely more oppressive and degrading. Whose appears the greater liberty and the least oppression, his who is governed by the salutary laws of the gospel, or his who is the sport and victim of his own ignorance and passions, or of the opinion of the world, to which, at the expense of the violation of his own conscience, he feels himself com-

pelled ignominiously to submit? The question needs not an answer. There is everything honourable in the one service, everything dishonourable in the other. Only that man is truly a free man who is a servant of Christ.

II. **The servant of Christ.**—Others profess that they are servants of God; the Christian replies that he is a servant of Christ. There is perhaps nothing by which his faith is more distinctly characterised than this. "Is he not, then, a servant of God?" some one may ask, either in the spirit of a scorning objector or in that of an astonished inquirer who is as yet ignorant of the beautiful mystery of Christian salvation. When others profess that they are the servants of God, and when the Christian replies that he is a servant of Christ, does it signify that he is not a servant of the eternal Father? Such is the question; and our reply is, that in serving Christ he approves himself not only the best servant of God, but the only one whose service is genuine. In serving Christ he serves God, because God has so appointed and ordained. He has ordained that we be the servants of His Son; and if we serve not His Son, then we resist His ordination, so that we serve neither His Son nor Himself.

III. **The Christian is Christ's servant, not by hire, but by purchase.**—This is a circumstance which claims our most thoughtful consideration. In the case of a servant who is hired there is a limitation of the master's right, by the terms of the agreement, in respect of the kind and amount of labour to be exacted. There is also a definite term, at the expiry of which the right of service ceases, and the remuneration of the service is exigible by law. There is a vast difference in the case of a purchased servant, or, as otherwise expressed, a slave. He is his master's property, to be treated entirely according to his master's discretion. There is no limitation either to the amount or nature of the work which he may exact. The period of service is for life, and no remuneration can be claimed for the labour, howsoever heavy and protracted. Our servant-condition in relation to Christ is of this character: He does not hire us, but has purchased us—purchased us by His blood, and made us His property, to be used according to His sovereign will. But this is far from being all. Our gracious Master often sinks, as it were, the consideration of His past services—of His humiliation, His privation, His wounds and agony by which he saved us from punishment and woe—and reasons and deals with us as if we were hired servants and could merit something at His hand, animating us in our work by exhibiting to our hope that crown of glory which He will confer on all who are faithful unto death. Blessed servitude—the servitude of the Christian! Servitude of peace! Servitude of honour! Servitude of liberty! Servitude of victory and everlasting glory! 1. The Christian, as a servant, *submits his mind to the authority of Christ*—submits it to Him in respect of his opinions; at the utterance of His word renounces its own judgments and prejudices, and turns away from the teaching of the world's philosophy and priesthood in scorn, saying, "You have no part in me. Christ is the Lord of my conscience; I will listen to Him." 2. As the servant of Christ, the Christian *subjects his body to His control and regulation* in the gratifying of its appetites, and in providing for its comfort and adornment; his lips in what they speak; his hands in what they do; his ears in what they listen to; his eyes in what they read and look at; and his feet in all their journeyings and movements. 3. As the servant of Christ, he *regulates his family according to his Master's mind and law.* 4. As a servant of Christ, he *conducts his business according to Christ's law*, with the strictest honesty, and for Christ's end, distributing his profits in a proportion—I shall say a large proportion; nay, I shall say a very large proportion—to the mainte-

nance and education of his family, and some provision of an inheritance for them, and even a considerable proportion for the gratification of his own tastes. Is not that a large allowance for a slave? But oh, some of you! you seize on all—wickedly appropriate all to yourselves, or part, and that with a grudge, a murmur, and a scowl, with but the smallest fraction to the Master's poor and the Master's Church! Slaves indeed! Slaves of Avarice and his daughter, Cruelty! 5. As a servant of Christ, *the country of the Christian is Christ's*, to be regulated, so far as his influence and vote may extend, by Christ's rule, for Christ's ends.—*W. Anderson, LL.D.*

Vers. 11, 12. *The Gospel and the Call to preach it.*

I. It is necessary that men should be assured and certified that **the doctrine of the gospel and the Scripture is not of man but of God.**—That the Scripture is the word of God there are two testimonies. 1. One is the evidence of God's Spirit imprinted and expressed in the Scriptures, and this is an excellence of the word of God above all words and writings of men and angels. 2. The second testimony is from the prophets and apostles, who were ambassadors of God extraordinarily to represent His authority unto His Church, and the penmen of the Holy Ghost to set down the true and proper word of God.

II. It is necessary that men should be assured in their consciences that **the calling and authority of their teachers are of God.**—To call men to the ministry and dispensation of the gospel belongs to Christ, who alone giveth the power, the will, the deed; and the Church can do no more than testify, publish, and declare whom God calleth.

III. **The gospel which Paul preached was not human**—he did not receive it, neither was he taught it by man; and preached it not by human but by divine authority. 1. Christ is the great prophet and doctor of the Church. His office is: (1) To manifest and reveal the will of the Father touching the redemption of mankind. (2) To institute the ministry of the word and to call and send ministers. (3) To teach the heart within by illuminating the mind and by working a faith of the doctrine taught. 2. There are two ways whereby Christ teaches those who are to be teachers. (1) By immediate revelation. (2) By ordinary instruction in schools by the means and ministry of men.

IV. **They who are to be teachers must first be taught,** and they must teach that which they have first learned themselves. They are first to be taught, and that by men where revelation is wanting. This is the foundation of the schools of the prophets. All men should pray that God would prosper and bless all schools of learning where this kind of teaching is in use.—*Perkins.*

The Gospel a Divine Revelation.

I. **It is not constructed by human ingenuity.**—"The gospel which was preached of me is not after man" (ver. 11).

II. **It derives no authority from man.**—"For I neither received it of man" (ver. 12).

III. **It is not acquired by mere mental culture.**—"Neither was I taught it."

IV. **It is a direct and special revelation from heaven.**—"But by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Apostolic Assurance of the Supernatural Character of the Gospel.—1. It is the custom of the adversaries of the truth, when they have nothing to say in reason against the doctrine itself, to cast reproach on those who preach it, and to question their call and authority to preach, that so they may indirectly at least reflect upon the doctrine. 2. As none may take upon him to dispense the word of God publicly unto others without a call from God, so there are several sorts of callings: one of men and ordinary when God

calls by the voices and consent of men; another of God and extraordinary, the call of the Church not intervening. 3. It is required of an apostle to have the infallible knowledge of the truth of the gospel, and this not wholly by the help of human means, as we learn at schools and by private study, but mainly by immediate inspiration from the Spirit of God. Paul shows that the gospel was not taught him of man; and this he saith, not to depress human learning, but that he may obviate the calumny of his adversaries who alleged he had the knowledge of the gospel by ordinary instruction from men only, and so was no apostle.—*Fergusson.*

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

A Zealous Ritualist—

I. **Is conspicuous for his adherence to religious formalities.**—"For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion" (ver. 13) —*of my manner of life formerly in Judaism.* Saul of Tarsus was a full-blown ritualist, and a master-leader in the art, setting the pattern to all his contemporaries. He did not play at forms and ceremonies. Their observance was to him a matter of life and death. An intense nature like his could do nothing by halves. The listlessness and pictorial parade of modern ritualism he would have denounced with withering scorn. Religious formality has for some minds an irresistible fascination. It appeals to the instinct of worship which is latent in all, and to the love of æstheticism which is shared by most in varying degrees. The votary deludes himself into the belief that signs and symbols represent certain great truths; but the truths soon fade away into the background, and he is in turn deluded in regarding the outward ceremonies as everything. Formality is the tendency of the mind to rest in the mere externals of religion to the neglect of the inner life of religion itself. It is the folly of valuing a tree for its bark instead of its goodly timber, of choosing a book for its ornate binding irrespective of its literary genius, of admiring the finished architecture of a building regardless of its accommodation or the character of its inmates. "There are two ways of destroying Christianity," says D'Aubigné; "one is to deny it, the other is to displace it." Formality seeks to displace it. Ritualism may be of use in the infantile stage, either of the world or the individual. It is a reversion to the petrifaction of ancient crudities. A robust and growing spiritual manhood is superior to its aids.

II. **Violently opposes the representatives of genuine piety.**—"How that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it" (ver. 13). Animated by extravagant zeal for the religion of his forefathers, the bigoted Pharisee became the deadliest enemy of the Church of Christ in its infant days. Indifferent to personal peril or to the feelings of the oppressed, he prosecuted his work of destruction with savage energy. He was a type of the Jewish fanatics who afterwards thirsted and plotted for his life, and the forerunner of the cruel zealots of the Inquisition and the Star Chamber in later times. The curse of ritualism is excessive intolerance. Blinded and puffed up with its unwarrantable assumptions, it loses sight of the essential elements of true religion. It sees nothing good in any other system but its own, and employs all methods that it dare, to compel universal conformity. It admits no rival. It alone is right; everything else is wrong, and all kinds of means are justifiable in crushing the heresy that presumes to deny its supreme claims. "Christ and Ritualism," says Horatius Bonar, "are opposed to each other, as light is to darkness. The cross and the crucifix cannot agree. Either ritualism will banish Christ or Christ will banish ritualism."

III. **Is distinguished by his ardent study and defence of traditional religionism.**—"And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (ver. 14). The apostle had studied the Mosaic law under the ablest tutors of his day. He knew Judaism by heart, and won a distinguished reputation for learning and for his strict adherence to the minutest details of traditional legalism. He was one of the ablest champions of the Mosaic system. The zealous ritualist spends his days and nights in studying, not the word of God, but the sayings of men and the rules of the Church handed down by the traditions of past generations. Divine revelation is ignored, and human authority unduly exalted. His studies are misdirected, and his zeal misspent. He is wasting his energy in defending a lifeless organism. No man can honestly and prayerfully study God's word and catch its meaning, and remain a mere ritualist.

Lessons.—1. *Ritualism is the worship of external forms.* 2. *It breeds a spirit of intolerance and persecution.* 3. *It supplants true religion.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 13, 14. *Mistaken Zeal*—

I. **May create a reputation for religious devotion.**—"Ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion" (ver. 13).

II. **Breeds the spirit of violent persecution.**—"How that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it" (ver. 13).

III. **Makes one ambitious for superiority.**—"Profited . . . above many my equals, . . . being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers" (ver. 14).

IV. **Is neither good nor wise.**

V. **Stores up a retrospect of bitter and humiliating regret.**

Review of a Misspent Life.—1. A sincere convert will not shun to make confession of his wicked life, not omitting anything which may tend to a just aggravation of it, not in a boasting manner, but that the freedom of God's grace may be commended. 2. That the Scriptures were indited by the Spirit of God, and the penmen not actuated with human policy, appears from this, with other evidences in the Scripture itself, that they concealed not their own faults, but blazed them to the world when the glory of God did so require. 3. Though the Church of God, as to the inward estate, cannot be utterly wasted, neither can the outward state be so far decayed as to cease to be, yet the Lord may so far give way to the rage of persecutors that the outward face and beauty of the Church may be totally marred, the members partly killed, partly scattered, the public ordinances suppressed, and the public assemblies interrupted. 4. The life and way of some engaged in a false religion may be so blameless and, according to the dictates of their deluded conscience, so strict, as that it may be a copy unto those who profess the true religion and a reproof for their palpable negligence. 5. As our affections of love, joy, hatred, anger, and grief are by nature so corrupt that even the choicest of them, if not brought in subjection to the word by the Spirit, will lay forth themselves upon forbidden and unlawful objects, so our zeal and fervency of spirit will bend itself more toward the maintenance of error than of truth. Error is the birth of our own invention; so is not truth.—*Fergusson.*

True and False Zeal.

I. **Zeal is a certain fervency of spirit arising out of a mixture of love and anger,** causing men earnestly to maintain the worship of God and all things pertaining thereto, and moving them to grief and anger when God is in any way dishonoured.

II. **Paul was zealous for the outward observance of the law** and for Pharisaical unwritten traditions.

III. **He himself condemns his zeal because it was against the word,** and tended to maintain unwritten traditions, and justification by the works of the law, out of Christ. What Paul did in his religion we are to do in the profession of the gospel. 1. We are to addict and set ourselves earnestly to maintain the truth of the gospel. 2. We are to be angry in ourselves and grieved when God is dishonoured and His word disobeyed. 3. We are not to give liberty to the best of our natural affections as to zeal, but mortify and rule them by the word.—*Perkins.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 15—19.

The Imperative Claims of a Divine Commission—

I. **Are independent of personal merit.**—"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace" (ver. 15). From the beginning the apostle was divinely destined to fulfil his high vocation. His Hebrew birth and Hellenistic culture combined to prepare him for his future work. When he developed into a hot persecutor of the Christian faith he seemed far away from his life-mission. But a change took place, and it soon became apparent that, not on the ground of any merit of his own, but because it pleased God, the training from his birth was the best possible preparation for his lofty calling. We cannot see far into the future, or forecast the issue of our own plans or of those we form for others.

> "There is a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough hew them as we may."

The divine element in our lives becomes more evident as we faithfully do the duty imposed on us. Joseph recognised this when he declared to his brethren, "It was not you that sent me hither, but God" (Gen. xlv. 8).

II. **Are based on an unmistakably divine revelation.**—"To reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen" (ver. 16). The dazzling appearance of Christ before his eyes, and the summons of His voice addressed to Saul's bodily ears, formed the special mode in which it pleased God to call him to the apostleship. But there was also the inward revelation of Christ to his heart by the Holy Ghost. It was this which wrought in him the great spiritual change, and inspired him to be a witness for Christ to the Gentiles. His Judaic prejudices were swept away, and he became the champion of a universal gospel. The same revelation that made Paul a Christian made him the apostle of mankind. The true preacher carries within his own spiritually renovated nature evidence and authority of his divine commission.

> "This is what makes him the crowd-drawing preacher,
> There's a background of God to each hard-working feature;
> Every word that he speaks has been fierily furnaced
> In a blast of a life which has struggled in earnest."

III. **Are superior to the functions of human counsel.**—"I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me" (vers. 16, 17). The counsel of the wise and good is valuable, and ordinarily should be diligently sought and thoughtfully pondered. But when God calls, the commission is beyond either the advice or the opposition of men. Paul had reached a stage into which no human authority could lift him, and from which it could not dislodge him. He might legitimately confer with others as to methods of work, but his call to work was imposed upon him by a power to which all human counsellors and ecclesiastical magnates must submit.

Channing once said: "The teacher to whom are committed the infinite realities of the spiritual world, the sanctions of eternity, the powers of the life to come, has instruments to work with which turn to feebleness all other means of influence."

IV. **Stimulate to active service.**—"But I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus" (ver. 17). Immediately after his conversion the history tells us, "Straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues" (Acts ix. 20). In Arabia, a country of the Gentiles, he doubtless preached the gospel, as he did before and after at Damascus, and thus demonstrated the independence of his apostolic commission. A call to preach demands immediate response, and impels to earnest and faithful endeavour. It is said that Whitefield's zealous spirit exhausted all its energies in preaching, and his full dedication to God was honoured by unbounded success. The effect produced by his sermons was indescribable, arising in a great degree from the most perfect forgetfulness of self during the solemn moment of declaring the salvation that is in Christ Jesus. His evident sincerity impressed every hearer, and is said to have forcibly struck Lord Chesterfield when he heard him at Lady Huntingdon's. The preacher, as the ambassador for Christ, is eager to declare His message, and anxious it should be understood and obeyed.

V. **Are recognised by the highest ecclesiastical authority.**—"Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and . . . James the Lord's brother" (vers. 18, 19). The claims of Paul to the apostleship, evidenced by such supernatural signs and such solid Christian work and patient suffering, were at length acknowledged by the chief leaders of the mother Church in Jerusalem. Good work advertises itself, and sooner or later compels recognition. What an eventful meeting of the first gospel pioneers, and how momentous the influence of such an interview and consultation! Though the call of God is unacknowledged, ridiculed, and opposed, its duties must be faithfully discharged. The day of ample reward will come.

Lessons.—1. *God only can make the true preacher.* 2. *A call to preach involves suffering and toil.* 3. *The fruit of diligent and faithful work will certainly appear.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 15-17. *The Conversion and Vocation of St. Paul.*

I. **The causes of St. Paul's conversion.**—1. The good pleasure of God. 2. His separation from the womb, which is an act of God's counsel whereby He sets men apart to be members of Christ and to be His servants in this or that office. 3. His vocation by grace—the accomplishment of both the former in the time which God had appointed.

II. **The manner of his vocation.**—"To reveal His Son in me." 1. By preparation. God humbled and subdued the pride and stubbornness of his heart and made him tractable and teachable. 2. By instruction. (1) Propounding unto him the commandment of the gospel, to repent and believe in Christ. (2) Offering to him the promise of remission of sins and life everlasting when he believed. 3. By a real and lively teaching when God made Paul in his heart answer the calling. Ministers of Christ must learn Christ as Paul learned Him.

III. **The end of Paul's conversion.**—To preach Christ among the Gentiles. 1. Christ is the substance or subject-matter of the whole Bible. 2. To preach Christ is: (1) To teach the doctrine of the incarnation of Christ, and His offices as King, Prophet, and Priest. (2) That faith is an instrument to apprehend and apply Christ. (3) To certify and reveal to every hearer that it is the will of God to

save him by Christ if he will receive Him. (4) That he is to apply Christ with His benefits to himself in particular. 3. To preach to the Gentiles: (1) Because the prophecies of the calling of the Gentiles must be fulfilled. (2) Because the division between the Jews and Gentiles is abolished.

IV. **Paul's obedience to the calling of God** (vers. 16, 17).—1. God's word, preached or written, does not depend on the authority of any man—no, not on the authority of the apostles themselves. 2. There is no consultation or deliberation to be used at any time touching the holding or not holding of our religion. 3. Our obedience to God must be without consultation. We must first try what is the will of God, and then absolutely put it into execution, leaving the issue to God. 4. Paul goes into Arabia and Damascus, and becomes a teacher to his professed enemies.—*Perkins.*

Vers. 15, 16. *Conversion as illustrated by that of St. Paul.*—In the case of St. Paul there are many circumstances not paralleled in the general experience of Christians; but in its essential features, in the views with which it was accompanied and the effects it produced, it was exactly the same as every one must experience before he can enter into the kingdom of God.

I. **Its causes.**—1. Paul was chosen by God before his birth to be a vessel of honour. "It pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb." Are not all genuine Christians addressed as "elect of God" or chosen of God, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ? Why should not the real Christian give scope to those emotions of gratitude which such reflections will inspire? 2. The more immediate cause was the call of divine grace. "And called me by His grace." There is a general call in the gospel addressed to all men indiscriminately. There is, in every instance of real conversion, another and inward call, by which the Spirit applies the general truth of the gospel to the heart. By this interior call Christ apprehends, lays hold on the soul, stops it in its impenitent progress, and causes it to hear His voice.

II. **The means by which conversion is effected.**—"To reveal His Son in me." The principal method which the Spirit adopts in subduing the heart of a sinner is a spiritual discovery of Christ. There is an outward revelation of Christ—in the Scriptures; and an internal, of which the understanding and the heart are the seat. 1. The Spirit reveals the greatness and dignity of Christ. 2. The transcendent beauty and glory of Christ. 3. The suitableness, fulness, and sufficiency of Christ to supply all our wants and relieve all our miseries.

III. **The effect of conversion on St. Paul.**—"Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." He set himself without hesitation or demur to discharge the duties of his heavenly vocation. 1. His compliance with the will of Christ was immediate. 2. Universal and impartial. 3. Constant and persevering.—*Robert Hall.*

Ver. 16. *The Qualification of the True Minister*—

I. **Begins in an unmistakable revelation of Christ to his own soul.**—"To reveal His Son in me."

II. **Urges him to declare the gospel to the most needy.**—"That I might preach Him among the heathen."

III. **Raises him above the necessity of mere human authority.**—"Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

Ver. 17. *The Divine Call to the Apostleship.*—1. That extraordinary way whereby the Lord made known His mind to the penmen of Scripture was so infallible in itself and so evident to those to whom it came to be no delusion that they were above all doubt, and needed not to advise with the best of men in order to their confirmation about the reality of it.

2. The Lord maketh sometimes the first piece of public service as hazardous, uncouth, and unsuccessful as any wherein He employs them afterwards, that His ministers may be taught to depend more on God's blessing than on human probabilities, and that they may give proof of their obedience. Thus it was with Moses (Exod. ii. 10), and Jeremiah (i. 19). 3. The apostles were not fixed to any certain charge, as ordinary ministers are. Their charge was the whole world. They went from place to place as the necessities of people required, or as God by His providence and Spirit directed.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 18. *Retirement a Preparation for Work.*—"I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus." 1. Affording opportunity for thought and self-testing. 2. Gives leisure for study and forming plans for future service. 3. Is often the prelude of a busy and prosperous career.

Vers. 18, 19. *The Divine Call acknowledged.* — 1. That nothing of Peter's supposed supremacy over Paul and the rest of the apostles can be gathered from this place appears from this, that Paul went first to his work before he came to Peter, and that his business with Peter was not to receive ordination from him or to evidence his subjection to him, but from respect and reverence to give him a friendly visit. 2. It ought to be the endeavour of Christ's ministers to entertain love and familiarity one with another, as also to make their doing so evident to others, it being most unseemly for those who preach the gospel of peace to others to live in discord among themselves. 3. As ministers may and ought to meet sometimes together, to evidence and entertain mutual love and concord, and because of that mutual inspection which they ought to have one of another, so their meetings ought neither to be so frequent nor of so long continuance as that their flocks suffer prejudice.—*Fergusson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 20—24.

God glorified in His Servant—

I. **By the undoubted truthfulness of his statements.**—"Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not" (ver. 20). The assertions of the apostle flatly contradicted the allegations of his enemies. They insinuated that Paul was but a messenger of the authorities of the Church at Jerusalem, and that all he knew of the gospel had been learned from the twelve. So far from this being the case it is evident that for several years he had been preaching the gospel, and had not seen any of the twelve, except Peter and James, and that only for a fortnight at Jerusalem about three years after his conversion. "In the present case," remarks Professor Jowett, "it is a matter of life and death to the apostle to prove his independence of the twelve." Having said all he can to substantiate his point, he concludes by a solemn appeal to God as to his veracity: "Behold, before God, I lie not." The apostle never makes an appeal like this lightly, but only in support of a vital truth he is specially anxious to enforce (Rom. ix. 1; 2 Cor. i. 17, 18, 23; 1 Thess. ii. 5).

> "When fiction rises pleasing to the eye,
> Men will believe, because they love the lie;
> But truth herself, if clouded with a frown,
> Must have some solemn proof to pass her down."
>
> *Churchill.*

The vigorous and faithful maintenance of the truth brings glory to God.

II. **By his evangelistic activity.**—"Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia" (ver. 21). During this tour very probably the Churches were founded, referred to in Acts xv. 23, 41. "A man's work," says George

Macdonald, "does not fall upon him by chance, but it is given him to do; and everything well done belongs to God's kingdom, and everything ill done to the kingdom of darkness." God is the sublime end of all human activity, and our powers can never be more nobly employed than in expounding His will, unfolding His gracious character, advancing the interests of His kingdom, and striving to promote His glory among the children of men. Man is never so great, so luminous, so grand as when he is doing work for God with the light and help of God; and all such work is a revelation of the character and purposes of God open to the eyes of all who will see.

III. **By the reputation of his changed life.**—"And was unknown by face unto the Churches: . . . they had heard only, That he which persecuted us in times past now preached the faith which once he destroyed" (vers. 22, 23). The conversion of Saul of Tarsus was one of the most striking events in the early history of the Church. It was a marvel to all who had known his previous life. It was an unanswerable testimony to the power of the gospel, and an argument that has been used in all ages to illustrate the possibility of the salvation of the worst of sinners. It is said the Duke of Burgundy was born terrible. He would indulge in such paroxysms of rage that those who were standing by would tremble for his life. He was hard-hearted, passionate, incapable of bearing the least opposition to his wishes, fond of gambling, violent hunting, the gratifications of the table, abandoned to his pleasures, barbarous, and born to cruelty. With this was united a genius of the most extraordinary kind; quickness of humour, depth and justice of thought, versatility and acuteness of mind. The prodigy was, that in a short space of time the grace of God made him a new man. He became a prince, affable, gentle, moderate, patient, modest, humble, austere only to himself, attentive to his duties, and sensible of their extent. If we could lay a hand on the fly-wheel of the Scotch express, running fifty or sixty miles an hour, and stop it, we should perform an astounding miracle. But this is what God does in His miracles of conversion. He laid His mighty hand on the fly-wheel of Paul's life, and not only stopped its mad career, but turned it right round in the opposite direction. The persecutor becomes a preacher.

IV. **By the recognition of His divine call.**—"And they glorified God in me" (ver. 24). The attempt to disparage the authority of Paul was the work of a few malcontents, who sought to ruin his influence in order to extend their own. The Churches of Jerusalem and Judea, though many of them had not seen the apostle, acknowledged and praised God for the divine work done in him and by him. A few false teachers may work much mischief, but they cannot overturn the work of God, nor prevent its full recognition. The faithful servant may safely leave his reputation in the hands of God. It lifts humanity, especially Christianised humanity, into special dignity, when it is discovered that God is glorified in man.

Lessons.—1. *The gospel elevates man by transforming him.* 2. *The conscientious worker has God on his side.* 3. *God is glorified by obedient toil.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 20. *Self-conscious Truth.*—1. The choicest servants of Christ may be looked upon as liars and unworthy to be trusted, even by those to whom they are sent, and yet they must not give over to preach as knowing that the word spoken by them doth still get credit from some, and will beget trust to itself from others, and for the rest it will seal up their condemnation and make them inexcusable. 2. It is not unlawful for Christians to take an oath, providing it be with these conditions: (1) That the thing we swear

be truth. (2) That there be weighty reasons for taking an oath. (3) That we swear only by the name of God, and not by the creatures, seeing none but God can bear witness to the secrets of the heart.—*Fergusson.*

Vers. 21-24. *The Self-evidencing Proof of a divinely commissioned Messenger.*—1. Seen in disinterested labours and travels (vers. 21, 22). 2. Seen in a remarkable change of character and conduct (ver. 23). 3. Seen in that the glory of his work is ascribed to God (ver. 24).

Practical Proofs of Apostleship.

I. **Paul went from Jerusalem into Syria and Cilicia.**—1. Because he was ordained specially to be the apostle of the Gentiles. 2. Because Cilicia was his own country, and his love to his country was great. If any apostle above the rest be the pastor and universal bishop of the Church over the whole world, it is Paul and not Peter.

II. **Paul was known to the Christian Jews only by hearsay,** because it is the office of an apostle not to build on the foundation of another or to succeed any man in his labour, but to plant and found the Church of the New Testament.

III. Seeing the intent of the devil and wicked men is to destroy the faith, **we must have a special care of our faith.**—1. We must look that our faith be a true faith. 2. We must keep and lock up our faith in some safe and sure place—in the storehouse or treasury of a good conscience. 3. Our care must be to increase in faith that our hearts may be rooted and grounded in the love of God.

IV. **Our duty is to sanctify and glorify the name of God in every work of His.**—Neglect in glorifying and praising God is a great sin.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 24. *God glorified in Good Men.*—We are taught to honour God in man and man in God. We are taught to avoid, on the one hand, all creature idolatry, and, on the other, that cynical severity, or ungrateful indifference to the Author of all good in man, which undervalues or neglects the excellencies which ought to be held up to admiration that they may be imitated by ourselves and others. Each of these extremes robs God of His just revenue of grateful praise. In what does creature idolatry consist but in honouring and trusting in the natural and acquired excellencies of creatures to the exclusion of God? But is there then no wisdom, no might, no excellence, in man? As it were absurd to deny this, it would be affectation to pretend to overlook it. Admire and deny not this wisdom, acknowledge this efficiency, and affect not to lower its estimate; only glorify God who worketh all in all. If He has chosen any of them to be more eminently His instruments for the furtherance of His purposes of mercy to mankind, He does it by virtue of His sovereignty. If he continues their useful lives, whilst you have their light rejoice in the light and glorify Him from whom it comes as its original and source; and when He chooses to quench these stars of His right hand in the darkness of death, still glorify Him. As to us, this is to remind us of our dependence on Him, who appointed their orbit and invested them with their different degrees of glory; and as to them, though their lustre fades from these visible skies, it is that it may be rekindled in superior glory in the kingdom of their Father.—*R. Watson.*

CHAPTER II.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Then fourteen years after.**—From Paul's conversion inclusive. **I went again to Jerusalem.**—The same visit referred to in Acts xv., when the council of the apostles and Church decided that Gentile Christians need not be circumcised.

Ver. 2. **I went up by revelation.**—Quite consistent with the fact that he was sent as a deputy from the Church at Antioch (Acts xv. 2). The revelation suggested to him that this deputation was the wisest course. **Communicated privately to them which were of reputation.**—It was necessary that the Jerusalem apostles should know beforehand that the gospel Paul preached to the Gentiles was the same as theirs, and had received divine confirmation in the results it wrought on the Gentile converts.

Ver. 3. **Neither Titus** [not even Titus], **being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.**—The apostles, constrained by the firmness of Paul and Barnabas, did not compel or insist on his being circumcised. Thus they virtually sanctioned Paul's course among the Gentiles, and admitted his independence as an apostle. To have insisted on *Jewish* usages for *Gentile* converts would have been to make them essential parts of Christianity.

Ver. 4. **False brethren unawares** [in an underhand manner] **brought in privily to spy out.**—As foes in the guise of friends, wishing to destroy and rob us of our liberty—from the yoke of the ceremonial law.

Ver. 5. **To whom we gave place by subjection not for an hour.**—We would willingly have yielded for love, if no principle was at issue, but not in the way of subjection. Truth precise, unaccommodating, abandons nothing that belongs to itself, admits nothing that is inconsistent with it (*Bengel*).

Ver. 6. **They in conference added nothing to me.**—As I did not by conference impart to them aught at my conversion, so they now did not impart aught additional to me above what I already knew. Another evidence of the independence of his apostleship.

Ver. 9. **They gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship.**—Recognising me as a colleague in the apostleship, and that the gospel I preached to the Gentiles by special revelation was the same as theirs.

Ver. 10. **Remember the poor.**—Of the Jewish Christians in Judea then distressed. Paul's past care for their poor prompted this request. His subsequent zeal in the same cause was the answer to their appeal (Acts xi. 29, 30; Rom. xv. 26, 27; 1 Cor. xvi. 3; 2 Cor. ix. 1; Acts xxiv. 17).

Ver. 11. **When Peter was come to Antioch I withstood him to the face.**—The strongest proof of the independence of his apostleship in relation to the other apostles, and an unanswerable argument against the Romish dogma of the supremacy of St. Peter.

Ver. 13. **The other Jews dissembled likewise with him.**—The question was not whether Gentiles were admissible to the Christian covenant without becoming circumcised, but whether the Gentile Christians were to be admitted to social intercourse with the Jewish Christians without conforming to the Jewish institution. It was not a question of liberty and of bearing with others' infirmities, but one affecting the essence of the gospel, whether the Gentiles are to be virtually compelled to live as do the Jews in order to be justified.

Ver. 14. **Walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel.**—Which teaches that justification by legal works and observances is inconsistent with redemption by Christ. Paul alone here maintained the truth against Judaism, as afterwards against heathenism (2 Tim. iv. 16, 17).

Ver. 17. **Is therefore Christ the minister of sin?**—Thus to be justified by Christ it was necessary to sink to the level of Gentiles—to become sinners, in fact. But are we not thus making Christ a minister of sin? Away with the profane thought! No; the guilt is not in abandoning the law, but in seeking it again when abandoned. Thus, and thus alone, we convict ourselves of transgression (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 19. **I through the law am dead to the law.**—By believing union to Christ in His death we, being considered dead with Him, are severed from the law's past power over us.

Ver. 21. **If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.**—Died needlessly, without just cause. Christ's having died shows that the law has no power to justify us, for if the law can justify or make us righteous, the death of Christ is superfluous.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—9.

Confirmatory Proofs of a Divine Call—

I. **Seen in a prudent consultation with the acknowledged leaders of the Church** (vers. 1, 2).—The men of reputation referred to in these verses are not so called by way of irony, but because of their recognised authority in the mother Church. Paul was not summoned to Jerusalem, but divinely directed to take the journey. Neither his teaching nor his office was called in question, nor did he fear the most searching inquiry into his commission. Conscious of his divine call, he claimed equality of status with the rest of the apostles, and explained to them and to the Church the principles and methods of the gospel he preached. He had nothing to fear, whatever might be the judgment of the Church leaders in Jerusalem. He expected from them nothing but sympathy and encouragement in his work, and he hailed with joy the opportunity of sharing the counsel of men as interested as himself in the success of the gospel. With his God-given convictions and views, it was impossible for him to meet the apostles on any other ground than that of perfect equality.

II. **Seen in a prompt and stern refusal to compromise principle** (vers. 3-5).—The object of Paul's visit to Jerusalem was to discuss a vital principle of the gospel—the right of the Gentiles to the privileges of the gospel without observing the works of the Jewish law. A misunderstanding at that critical moment might have imperilled the liberty of the gospel. The presence of Barnabas and Titus was significant—the one a pure Jew, a man of gentle disposition and generous impulse; and the other a Gentile convert, representing the world of the uncircumcised. It is to the credit of the Church leaders at Jerusalem that, with their strong Jewish prejudices, they admitted that the legal rite of circumcision must not be imposed on Gentile converts. They were so convinced that this was the will of God, and that He had already sanctioned this as an essential feature of the gospel, that they dared do no other. An attempt was made, not by the apostles, but by certain "false brethren," to insist that Titus should be circumcised; but this was promptly and stoutly opposed. A concession on this point would have been fatal to the universality of the gospel—the whole Gentile world would have been trammelled with the bondage of legal ceremonies. It was then that the great battle of Christian liberty was fought and won. The victory was another testimony of the validity and power of the divine commission with which Paul was entrusted.

III. **Seen in the inability of the wisest leaders to add anything to the divine authority.**—"But of these who seemed to be somewhat . . . in conference added nothing to me" (ver. 6). When Paul was called to the apostleship he "conferred not with flesh and blood"; now he affirms that flesh and blood did not confer anything on him. In conference and debate with the chiefs of the Church he showed himself their equal, and on the great essentials of the gospel he was in perfect agreement with them. Though Paul is too modest to say it, so far from his learning anything from them, they were more likely to learn something from him, especially as to the wider scope of the gospel. "In doctrine Paul holds the primacy in the band of the apostles. While all were inspired by the Spirit of Christ, the Gentile apostle was in many ways a more richly furnished man than any of the rest. The Paulinism of Peter's first epistle goes to show that the debt was on the other side. Their earlier privileges and priceless store of recollections of all that Jesus did and taught were matched on Paul's side by a penetrating logic, a breadth and force of intellect applied to the facts of revelation, and a burning intensity of spirit which in their combination was unique. The Pauline teaching, as it appears in the New Testament, bears

in the highest degree the marks of original genius, the stamp of a mind whose inspiration is its own" (*Findlay*).

IV. **Seen in winning the recognition of a special mission and of equality in the apostleship.**—"They saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, . . . and perceived the grace that was given unto me," etc. (vers. 7-9). Paul won the confidence and admiration of his fellow-apostles. They listened with candour and ever-deepening interest to his explanations, and, whatever might have been their prejudices, they frankly acknowledged his divine commission. What a memorable day was that when James, Peter, John, and Paul met face to face! "Amongst them they have virtually made the New Testament and the Christian Church. They represent the four sides of the one foundation of the City of God. Of the evangelists, Matthew holds affinity with James; Mark with Peter; and Luke with Paul. James clings to the past, and embodies the transition from Mosaism to Christianity. Peter is the man of the present, quick in thought and action, eager, buoyant, susceptible. Paul holds the future in his grasp and schools the unborn nations. John gathers present, past, and future into one, lifting us into the region of eternal life and love."

Lessons.—*A divine call*—1. *Confers the necessary qualifications to carry out its mission.* 2. *Demands courage and fidelity.* 3. *Compels public recognition.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1, 2. *Truth its Own Evidence.*—1. Though the minister of Jesus Christ is not to depend upon the approbation of others for confirmation of his doctrine, as if he were uncertain before their testimony is added, yet he is not to be so self-willed as to misregard what others judge or think, but ought to demit himself so far as to give a friendly account of the doctrine, that mistakes arising from misinformation may be removed and the joint consent of others to the truth obtained. 2. As there are always some in the Church of God who have deservedly more reputation than others, so Christian prudence will teach a man to be so far from striving against such that he will endeavour, by giving due respect to them, to receive approbation from such, that he may be in a better capacity to do good to others. 3. Nothing marreth the success of the gospel more than difference of judgments and strifes and debates among eminent preachers, many resolving to believe nothing till preachers agree among themselves, and many stumbling-blocks are cast before people by the venting of passions, jealousies, animosities, and revenge. Paul endeavoured to get the consent of the other apostles to the doctrines preached by him, lest by the calumnies of his adversaries his preaching should be useless.—*Fergusson.*

Vers. 3-5. *The Power of Truth.*

I. **Superior to ceremonial observances** (ver. 3).

II. **Detects and exposes the wiliest tactics of false teachers** (ver. 4).

III. **Is uncompromising in its attitude towards the subtlest errors** (ver. 5).

Vers. 4, 5. *False Brethren and their Treatment.*

I. **The Church of God on earth, even at the best, hath wicked men and hypocrites in it.**

II. **They who teach Christ, joining some other thing with Him in the cause of salvation, are said to creep in,** because in appearance they maintain Christ; yet because they add something to Christ, they neither enter nor continue in the true Church with any good warrant from God.

III. **No man can set down the precise time when errors had their beginning,** for the authors thereof enter in secretly, not observed of men.

IV. **The false brethren urged circumcision to bring the converts**

into bondage.—They that be of a corporation stand for their liberties. What a shame it is that men should love bondage, and neglect the spiritual liberty which they have by Christ.

V. **The false brethren urged the apostles to use circumcision but once;** but they would not yield so much as once, because their act would have tended to the prejudice of Christian liberty in all places. Julian, sitting in a chair of state, gave gold to his soldiers one by one, commanding them to cast frankincense so much as a grain into the fire that lay upon a heathenish altar. Christian soldiers refused to do it, and they which had not refused afterwards recalled their act and willingly suffered death. We are not to yield the least part of the truth of the gospel. This truth is more precious than the whole world beside. There is no halting between two religions.

VI. **The apostles gave no place by way of subjection.**—They willingly suffered their doctrine to be tried, yet they were not bound to subjection. We are to give place by meek and patient bearing of that which we cannot mend, but we are not to give place by subjection.

VII. **If circumcision be made a necessary cause of salvation, the truth of the gospel does not continue,** and falsehood comes in the room.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 4. *A Spy.*—Captain Turner Ashby was a young officer in the Confederate army, the idol of the troops for his general bravery, but especially for his cleverness in gathering information of the enemy. On one occasion he dressed himself in a farmer's suit of homespun that he borrowed, and hired a plough-horse to personate a rustic horse-doctor. With his saddlebags full of some remedy for spavin or ringbone, he went to Chambersburg, and returned in the night with an immense amount of information. His career was one full of romantic episode.

Ver. 5. *Fidelity to Truth.*—1. Though much may be done for composing Church differences by using meekness and forbearance towards those who oppose themselves, yet we are not for peace' sake to quit the least part of truth. Thus Paul, who for lawful ceding became all things to all men, would not give place by way of subjection, so as to yield the cause to the adversaries; neither would he do anything, in its own nature indifferent, that would be an evidence of yielding. 2. A minister, when called to confess and avow truth, hath not only his own peace with God and keeping of a good conscience to look to, but also the condition of his flock, who will be shaken or confirmed in the truth by his faint or bold and faithful confession. 3. It is not enough that people have the name of the gospel among them or some truths mixed with errors; but all, and especially ministers, should endeavour to have the gospel in purity and integrity, free from any mixture of contrary errors.—*Fergusson.*

The Truth not to be yielded.—Shortly after James I. came to the throne of England he set up a claim to all the small estates in Cumberland and Westmorland, on the plea that the *Statesmen* were merely the tenants of the Crown. The Statesmen met, to the number of two thousand, at Ratten Heath, between Kendal and Staveley, where they came to the resolution that "they had won their lands by the sword, and were able to hold them by the same." After that meeting no further claim was made to their estates on the part of the Crown.

Vers. 6-9. *Recognition of a Special Mission.*

I. **By men of reputation who confessed their inability to augment its authority** (ver. 6).

II. **Acknowledging that the commission was distinctly divine** (vers. 7, 8).

III. **Confirmed by cordially ad-**

mitting the messenger into the fellowship of highest service (ver. 9).

Vers. 8, 9: *Divine Blessing the Highest Sanction of Ministerial Authority.*—1. It is not the pains of ministers, or any virtue in the word preached, from whence success flows, but from the effectual working of the Spirit. Paul ascribed the success both of his own and Peter's ministry to this. 2. Whom God doth call to any employment, and chiefly whom He calls to the ministry, He fitteth with gifts and abilities suitable thereto. James, Cephas, and John did not acknowledge Paul to be an apostle called by God, but on perceiving that grace and gifts, ordinary and extraordinary, were bestowed upon him. 3. We ought not to withhold our approbation, especially when it is craved, from that which by evident signs and reasons we perceive to be approved of God, though the giving of our approbation may disoblige those who pretend much friendship towards us. —*Fergusson.*

The Efficacy of the Christian Ministry.

I. **That grace or power to regenerate is not included in the word preached,** as virtue to heal in a medicine. To regenerate is the proper work of God.

II. **That grace is not inseparably annexed and tied to the word preached,** for to some it is the savour of death unto death.

III. **The preaching of the word is an external instrument of faith** and regeneration, and the proper effect of it is to declare or signify.

IV. The apostles at Jerusalem **acknowledged Paul to be an apostle, because he had the gifts of an apostle,** and because his ministry was powerful among the Gentiles.

V. As all ministers in their places are pillars, they are hereby admonished **to be constant in the truth against all enemies whatsoever.**

VI. As ministers are pillars, we are taught **to cleave to them and their ministry** at all times—in life and death.—*Perkins.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 10.

Christianity and Poverty.

I. **Christianity has ever been the friend of the poor.**—1. *The poor who are made so by accepting Christianity.* Accepting Christ often means the loss of friends, of status, of fortune. The discovery of this result among the first Christians might have much to do in the formation of a common fund. There are many Jews and heathen to-day who are convinced of the truth of Christianity, but hesitate to make a public avowal of their belief because of the apparent impossibility of gaining a livelihood and the certainty of social ostracism. Christian missionaries are not in a position to guarantee their support, nor do they wish to encourage, a system that might easily degenerate into wholesale bribery. There are converts who run all risks and deliberately accept Christ and poverty. All such the Christian Church, often at great sacrifice, does its best to befriend.

2. *The poor who are made so by unavoidable calamity.*—Judea was devastated by famine in the reign of Claudius Cæsar, and the apostles promptly organised relief for the sufferers in the Jewish Churches (Acts xi. 27-30). Christianity has ever been ready to help the distressed and unfortunate. The hospitals, almshouses, and other benevolent institutions that abound are substantial monuments of the practical benevolence of the Christian Church. Christianity is the best friend of the people.

II. **Christianity inculcates a zealous and unselfish charity.**—"Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same I also was forward [zealous] to do." Paul had already rendered noble service in this direction, and was prompted

by the spirit of the gospel to continue to do so. He was zealous in good works, though he stoutly denied any merit in them to justify the sinner. His first concern was to help the *Jewish* poor, though many of them impugned his apostolic authority and strove to ruin his influence. As champion of the Gentiles he employed the wealth of his converts in supplying the needs of his famishing Jewish brethren. Christian charity is superior to the jealousies of sects and parties, and even to personal insult and wrong. Behind the hand of the generous alms-giver is the heart of love.

III. **Christianity elevates and enriches the poor.**—It enjoins temperance, industry, honesty, and perseverance—the practice of which has raised many from poverty to wealth. The man who has prospered should never forget the claims of the poor. It is said that a certain man dreamed that the Saviour appeared to him and upbraided him with giving so little to His cause. The man replied, "I can't afford it." "Very well," said the Saviour; "let it be so. But do you remember, that when that business panic happened, how you prayed to Me to keep you out of difficulties? And I heard your prayer and tided you over the trouble. And do you remember also, when your little child was sick, how you prayed that her life might be spared, and again I heard your prayer and restored her? But now let it be an understanding between us that henceforth when you are in trouble I do nothing for you, seeing you can't afford to help Me." The man's conscience was touched, and he exclaimed, "Lord, take what I have; it is Thine."

Lessons.—1. *Christianity is the source of the highest philanthropy.* 2. *Is the unfailing hope and comfort of the poor.* 3. *Has achieved its greatest triumphs among the poor.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 10. *Remember the Poor.*

I. **The Church of Jerusalem was in extreme poverty.**—1. Because the poorer sort received the gospel. 2. Because the richer were deprived of their riches for their profession of the name of Christ.

II. It is the office of pastors and teachers, not only to preach and dispense the word, but also **to have care of the poor.**

III. **Satisfaction, recompense, and restitution are the way to life** by the appointment of God.—1. He must restore who is the cause of any wrong or loss to others and all that are accessory. 2. Restitution is to be made to him that is wronged and bears the loss if he be known and alive; if he be dead, to his heirs; if all be dead, to the poor. 3. The things to be restored are those which are of us unjustly received or detained, either known to us or unknown. 4. As to the order of restitution, things certain must first be restored, and things uncertain after.

IV. It is not enough for us to give good words and to wish well, but we must in our places and calling **do our endeavour that relief may be sealed to our poor.**—1. The charge was great to maintain the altar of the Lord in the Old Testament; the poor come in the room of the altar. 2. The poor represent the person of Christ. 3. Compassion in us is a pledge or an impression of the mercy that is in God towards us, and by it we may know or feel in ourselves that mercy belongs unto us. The observing of the commandment of relief is the enriching of us all.—*Perkins.*

Christian Duty to the Poor.—1. It is frequently the lot of those who are rich in grace to be poor in the things of the present life, and driven into such straits as to be forced to live upon some charitable supply from others,

God seeing it convenient hereby to wean them from worldly contentments that heaven may be more longed after and more sweet when it comes. 2. Though those who are our own poor, within the bounds where we live, are chiefly to be relieved by us, yet in cases of extremity the poor who live remote from us are also to be supplied. 3. Ministers ought to press upon the people, not only duties which are easy and cost them nought, but also those that are burdensome and expensive, especially that they would willingly give of those things they enjoy for the supply of others who want.—*Fergusson.*

The Poor Representative of Christ.—One evening at supper, when one of the boys had said the grace, "Come, Lord Jesus, be our Guest, and bless what Thou hast provided," a little fellow looked up and said, "Do tell me why the Lord Jesus never comes. We ask Him every day to sit with us, and He never comes!" "Dear child, only believe, and you may be sure He will come, for He does not despise our invitation." "I shall set a seat," said the little fellow, and just then there was a knock at the door. A poor frozen apprentice entered, begging a night's lodging. He was made welcome, the chair stood empty for him, every child wanted him to have his plate, and one was lamenting that his bed was too small for the stranger, who was quite touched by such uncommon attentions. The little one had been thinking hard all the time. "Jesus could not come, and so He sent this poor man in His place: is that it?" "Yes, dear child; that is just it. Every piece of bread and every drink of water that we give to the poor, or the sick, or the prisoners for Jesus' sake, we give to Him."—*Memoir of John Falk.*

Remembrance of the Poor recommended.

I. **The nature of the assertion.**—1. Remember the work of the poor. 2. The deprivations of the poor. 3. Our remembrance of the poor should be founded on a personal acquaintance with their circumstances. "Indeed, sir," said a person of large property, "I am a very compassionate man; but to tell you the truth, I do not know any person in want." He kept aloof from the poor.

II. **Obligations to comply with the recommendation.**—1. The dictates of humanity require it. 2. The demands of duty. 3. The rights of justice. 4. The claims of interest.

III. **Answer objections.**—Such as: 1. My circumstances are impoverished and I have nothing to spare. 2. Charity must begin at home. 3. I have a right to do what I will with my own. 4. The poor do not deserve to be remembered.—*Beta.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 11—21.

A Fearless Defence of Fundamental Truth—

I. **Does not hesitate to impeach a distinguished Church dignitary of inconsistency.**—"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed," etc. (vers. 11-14). Peter had been accustomed to mingle with the Gentile converts on the ground of perfect social equality. Influenced by the fierce bigots of legalism, who insinuated that the circumcised occupied a superior status to the uncircumcised, he withdrew from the social circle of the Gentiles and confined himself to that of his Jewish brethren. The pliability of his impulsive nature led him into this as into other mistakes. To create a social distinction between Jew and Gentile was to undermine the gospel. Paul saw at a glance the threatened peril, and it needed all his tact and courage to confront it. Though it meant a public impeachment of the sincerity and consistency of one of the most venerated apostles, the champion of the Gentiles did

not hesitate. Alone, even Barnabas having for the time being deserted him, he stood up boldly for the truth of the gospel.

II. **Is the opportunity for an authoritative restatement of the truth imperilled** (vers. 15-18).—In these verses the apostle again sets forth the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith, without the works of the law. The Judaisers contended that to renounce legal righteousness was in effect to promote sin—to make Christ the minister of sin (ver. 17). Paul retorts the charge on those who made it, and showed that they promote sin who set up legal righteousness again (ver. 18). The reproach of the Judaisers was in reality the same that is urged against evangelical doctrine still—that it is *immoral*, placing the virtuous and vicious in the common category of sinners (*Findlay*). "The complaint was this," says Calvin,—"Has Christ therefore come to take away from us the righteousness of the law, to make us polluted who were holy? Nay, Paul says—he repels the blasphemy with detestation. For Christ did not introduce sin, but revealed it. He did not rob them of righteousness, but of the false show thereof."

III. **Is made more impressive by showing the effect of the truth on personal experience** (vers. 19-21).—In these words the apostle indicates that his own deliverance from the law was effected by being dead to the law—being crucified with Christ; and that his own spiritual life was originated and sustained by a living faith in a loving and self-sacrificing Christ. "Legalism is fatal to the spiritual life in man. Whilst it clouds the divine character, it dwarfs and petrifies the human. What becomes of the sublime mystery of the life hid with Christ in God, if its existence is made contingent on circumcision and ritual performance? To men who put meat and drink on a level with righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, or in their intercourse with fellow-Christians set points of ceremony above justice, mercy, and faith, the very idea of a spiritual kingdom of God is wanting. The religion of Jesus and of Paul regenerates the heart, and from that centre regulates and hallows the whole ongoing of life. Legalism guards the mouth, the hands, the senses, and imagines that through these it can drill the man into the divine order. The latter theory makes religion a mechanical system; the former conceives it as an inward, brganic life."

Lessons.—1. *The leaven of error is not easily suppressed.* 2. *True religion has never lacked a race of brave defenders.* 3. *Experimental religion is the best guarantee of its permanence.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 11-13. *Christian Consistency*—

I. **May be spoilt by yielding to an unworthy fear** (ver. 12).

II. **Should be strictly maintained for the sake of others** (ver. 13).

III. **Should be defended with intrepid courage** (ver. 11).

Ver. 11. *An Astute Defender of the Faith.*

I. **Here we have an example of true virtue,** in St. Paul resisting evil to the utmost of His power. In like manner must every one of us resist evil, first in himself and then in them that appertain to him.

II. **An example of boldness and liberty in reproving sin.**—1. This liberty in reproving is not the fruit of a bold and rash disposition, but is the fruit of God's Spirit, and is so to be acknowledged. 2. This liberty is to be ordered by a sound mind whereby we are able to give a good account of our reproofs, both for the matter and manner of them. 3. Our admonitions must be seasoned and tempered with love.

III. **An example of an ingenuous and honest mind.**—When Paul sees Peter he reproves him to the face. Contrary to this is the common practice in

backbiting, whispering, and tale-bearing, whereby it comes to pass that when a man is in fault every man knows it save he who is in fault. We see that excellent men, even the chief apostles, are subject to err and be deceived.—*Perkins.*

Vers. 12, 13. *The Power of Example.*—1. So weak and inconstant are the best of men that, being left to themselves, the least blast of temptation will make them break off the course of doing well in the very midst, and, without respect either to conscience or credit, openly desert it. 2. To separate from a true Church and break off communion with its members cannot be attempted without sin, not though we eschew the offence and stumbling of many. 3. Of so great force is the bad example of men, eminent, gracious, and learned, that not only the weak and infirm, but even those who are strong and richly endowed with both grace and parts, will sometimes be corrupted by it. It is usual for us unawares to esteem such as more than men, and being once so far engaged in our esteem of them we do not so narrowly examine their actions as we do those of other men. 4. An inundation of evil examples, though held forth by private Christians, is so impetuous and of such force to carry others along with it, that even the very best of men can hardly stand against it.—*Fergusson.*

An Erring Apostle.

I. **Peter's sin was simulation.**—Among the Gentiles at Antioch he used Christian liberty in eating things forbidden by the ceremonial law; yet after the coming of certain Jews from Jerusalem, he separates himself from the Gentiles, and plays the Jew among the Jews. This act of Peter was not a sin in itself, but the circumstances made it a sin 1. He not only abstained from meats forbidden by the ceremonial law, but withdrew himself from the Gentiles and kept company apart with the Jews. 2. He abstained not among the Jews at Jerusalem, but at Antioch among the Gentiles, where a little before he had openly done the contrary, using his Christian liberty. 3. He used this abstinence when certain Jews came from Jerusalem to search out the liberty of the Gentiles. 4. While Peter seeks to avoid the small offence of some Jews, he incurs a greater offence of all the Gentiles. 5. This act of Peter tended to the overthrowing of Paul's ministry and the suppressing of the truth of the gospel.

II. **The cause of Peter's sin was fear of offending the Jews.**—It was a sin because he feared man more than God. It was a sin, not of malice, but infirmity. A sin of infirmity is when there is a purpose in the heart not to sin, and yet for all this the sin is committed, by reason the will is overcarried by temptation, or by violence of affection as by fear, anger, lust.

III. **The effect of Peter's sin.**—He drew the Jews and Barnabas to the like dissimulation. Here we see the contagion of an evil example. 1. Ministers of the word must join with good doctrine the example of a good life. 2. Practice in the ministry is a part of the teaching. 3. All superiors are warned to go before their inferiors by good example. 4. The consent of many together is not a note of truth. Peter, Barnabas, and the Jews, all together are deceived; Paul alone has the truth. Ponormitane said, "A layman bringing Scripture is to be preferred before a whole council." Paphnutius alone had the truth, and the whole council of Nice inclined to error.—*Perkins.*

Vers. 14-16. *Justification by Faith, not by Works.*—1. Though private sins, which have not broken forth to a public scandal, are to be rebuked in private, public sins are to receive public rebukes, that public scandal may be removed, and others scared from taking encouragement to do the like (ver. 14). 2. Though the binding power of the ceremonial law was

abrogated at Christ's death, and the practice in some things left as a thing lawful and in itself indifferent, yet the observance, even for that time, was dispensed with more for the Jews' sake, and was more tolerable in them who were born and educated under that yoke, than in the Gentiles, to whom that law was never given, and so were to observe it, or any part of it, only in case of scandalising the weak Jews by their neglecting of it (ver. 14). 3. Though every man by nature is a child of wrath and enemy to God, yet those born within the visible Church have a right to Church privileges and to enjoy the external means of grace and salvation (ver. 15). 4. The doctrine of justification by faith and not by works was early opposed, and no doctrine so much opposed, because no truth is more necessary to be kept pure, as if it be kept pure several other truths are kept pure also, and if it fall other truths fall with it (ver. 16).—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 16. *Justification by Faith.*

I. **Man is justified by the mere mercy of God.**—And there is excluded by justification all merit of congruity, all meritorious works of preparation wrought by us, all co-operation of man's will with God's grace in the effecting of our justification.

II. **Man is justified by the mere merit of Christ.**—That is, by the meritorious obedience which He wrought in Himself, and not by anything wrought by Him in us.

III. **A sinner is justified by mere faith.**—That is, nothing within us concurs as a cause of our justification but faith, and nothing apprehends Christ's obedience for our justification but faith. This will more easily appear if we compare faith, hope, and love. Faith is like a hand that opens itself to receive a gift, and so is neither love nor hope. Love is also a hand, but yet a hand that gives out, communicates, and distributes. For as faith receives Christ into our hearts, so love opens the heart and pours out praise and thanks to God and all manner of goodness to men. Hope is no hand, but an eye that wistfully looks and waits for the good things faith believes. Therefore it is the only property of faith to clasp and lay hold of Christ and His benefits.

IV. **The practice of them that are justified is to believe.**—To put their trust in Christ. 1. Faith and practice must reign in the heart and have all at command. We must not go by sense, feeling, reason, but shut our eyes and let faith keep our hearts close to the promise of God. Faith must overrule and command nature and the strongest affections thereof. 2. When we know not what to do by reason of the greatness of our distress, we must fix our hearts on Christ with separation, as he that climbs up a ladder or some steep place the higher he goes the faster he holds.—*Perkins.*

Vers. 17, 18. *False Methods of Salvation—*

I. **To seek justification in any other way than through Christ.**—"If, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are found sinners" (ver. 17).

II. **Reflect unjustly on the character of the only Saviour.**—"Is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid" (ver. 17).

III. **Aggravate our sin by restoring in practice what we have abandoned in theory.**—"For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor" (ver. 18).

Ver. 19. *The Christian Dead to the Law.*

I. **The state in which the apostle describes himself to be.**—"I am dead to the law." Not the moral law of God. Every rational creature in the universe is under its dominion, the believer as well as others. He must escape from existence before he can escape from the law of God. The apostle means he is dead to it as a covenant between God and himself. There still stands the law before him in all its primitive authority, purity,

and majesty; he honours it and strives to obey it, and often rejoices in the thought that the time will come when he shall have his soul in a state of perfect conformity to it, but this is all. Its life-giving, death-bringing powers are utterly at an end, and he knows they are at an end. He is dead to all hope from the law, dead to all expectation of heaven or of salvation from it. He builds no more hope on his obedience to it than as though the law had ceased to exist, and no more fear has he of condemnation from it. The believer, dead to the legal covenant, rests from it. The connection between him and it is over, and with it are over the feelings within him, the painful, perturbing, apprehensive, slavish feelings arising out of it.

II. **The means whereby the apostle has been brought into the state he describes.**—"I through the law am dead to the law." Suppose a man anxious to pass from one country to another, from a dangerous and wretched country to a safe and happy one. Directly in his road stands a mountain which he cannot pass over, and which he at first imagines he can without much difficulty climb. He tries, but scarcely has he begun to breast it when a precipice stops him. He descends and tries again in another direction. There another precipice or some other obstacle arrests his course; and still ever as he begins his ascent he is baffled, and the little way he contrives to mount serves only to show him more and more of the prodigious height of the mountain, and its stern, rugged, impassable character. At last, wearied and worn, heart-sick with labour and disappointment, and thoroughly convinced that no efforts of his can carry him over, he lies down at the mountain's foot in utter despair, longing still to be on the other side, but making not another movement to get there. Now ask him as he lies exhausted on the ground what has occasioned his torpor and despair; he will say that mountain itself: its situation between him and the land of his desires, and its inaccessible heights and magnitude. So stands the law of God between the Christian and the land he longs for. The impossibility of making our way to God by means of the law arises from the extent of its requirements, and the unbending, inexorable character of its denunciations. We can do nothing but die to it, sink down before this broad, high, terrific mountain in utter despair. While through the law the believer dies to all hope from the law, through the cross of Christ he also dies to all apprehension from it.

III. **The design of this deadness to the law in the Christian's soul.**—"That I might live unto God." This living unto God dethrones self, discovers to the man the base, degrading idol to which he has been bowing down, makes him ashamed of the worship he has paid it, and places on the throne of his heart his Saviour and his God. His renunciation of his self-righteousness has gradually brought on other renunciations of self. The law driving him to Christ has been the means of driving him out of self altogether. It has brought him into the sphere of the gospel and among those soul-stirring principles, feelings, and aspirations connected with the gospel. There is no greater mistake than to imagine that the gospel has destroyed the law or loosened in any degree its hold on men. The gospel rests on the law. But for the law and its unbending, unchangeable, eternal character the gospel had not existed, for it would not have been needed. Dead to the law and alive unto God are two things that go together; the one springs out of the other. The more completely we die to the law as a covenant, the more fully, freely, and happily shall we live unto God.—*C. Bradley.*

Dead to the Law by the Law.

I. **The person justified is dead to the law.**—Here the law is compared to a hard and cruel master, and we to slaves or bondmen, who so long as they are alive are under the dominion

and at the command of their masters; yet when they are dead they are free from that bondage, and their masters have no more to do with them. To be dead to the law is to be free from the dominion of the law. 1. In respect of the accusing and damnatory sentence of the law. 2. In respect of the power of the law. 3. In respect of the rigour of the law, exacting most perfect obedience for our justification. 4. In respect of the obligation of the conscience to the observance of ceremonies.

II. **The justified person is dead to the law by the law.**—By the law of Moses I am dead to the law of Moses. The law accuses, terrifies, and condemns us, and therefore occasions us to flee unto Christ who is the cause that we die unto the law. As the needle goes before and draws in the thread which sews the cloth, so the law goes before and makes a way that grace may follow after and take place in the heart.

III. **The end of our death to the law is that we may live to God.**—We live to God wisely in respect of ourselves, godly in respect to God, justly in respect to men. That we may live godly we must: 1. Bring ourselves into the presence of the invisible God, and set all we do in His sight and presence. 2. We must take knowledge of the will of God in all things. 3. In all we do and suffer we must depend on God for success and deliverance. 4. In all things we must give thanks and praise to God.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 20. *The Believer crucified with Christ, and Christ living in the Believer.*

I. **The believer is conformed to the death of Christ.**—1. The nature of this crucifixion. It is figurative, not literal; yet real, and not chimerical. It not only signifies suffering and dying to sin, but also to effect this by the efficacy of Christ's cross. 2. The objects to which the Christian is crucified, and the principles which thereby expire: (1) The law considered as a means of justification. (2) The world—its applause, treasures, gratification. (3) Self. 3. The sufferings which accompany this crucifixion. Severe conviction and mortification. The complete surrender of heart is attended with many pangs. The continuance of the struggle is grievous.

II. **The believer participates in the life of Christ.**—1. The principle of the life—Christ living in the soul. 2. The evidences of this life—holy tempers, spiritual conversation, benevolent actions. 3. The instrument by which this life is introduced and maintained in the soul—faith.

Lessons.—1. *This subject furnishes a test to try the reality of our religion and the measure of our attainments.* 2. *Exposes the delusion of Pharisees, hypocrites, and antinomians.* 3. *Exhibits the dignity, felicity, and exalted hopes of the real believer.*—*Delta.*

The Religious Life of the Apostle—

I. **Was characterised from the beginning by promptitude of action.**

II. **Was marked by a constant solicitude for his own personal salvation.**

III. **Was eminent for its spirit of devotion.**

IV. **Was one of high fellowship with the divine.**

V. **Had its foundation and power in a living faith in Christ.**

Truths to live on.—Some one has said, "Give me a great truth that I may live on it." And the preacher may well say, "Give me a great truth that I may preach it." There are many great truths in this verse. And yet how simply are they put! The first great truth taught in this verse is the *oneness* between Christ and those who believe in Him. What St. Paul means is this, that having died with Christ on the cross, he has in Christ paid the penalty of sin, is therefore free from its guilt, and it is no longer his old self that lives and rules, but Christ lives in him. And is not this the Christ I want? Not only a Christ

to copy, not a Christ outside me, but a Christ living and reigning within. The believer lives by faith, and faith lives on the promises, for faith is a loving trust. The presence or absence of faith rules the whole destiny of every man. The man who believes will live one way. The unbeliever will live in another way. If you have this simple trust in Christ, you may appropriate the last clause of the verse, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." When did that love begin? Never. When will that love end? Never.

"Every human tie may perish,
Friend to friend ungrateful prove,
Mothers cease their own to cherish,
Heaven and earth at last remove;
But no changes
Can attend the Saviour's love."

For those Christ loves He will undertake altogether. He gives them His peace, His joy, His smile, His arm, His hand, His home. For *He gave Himself.* There are all treasures in Him. Strength for every need, wisdom for every question, comfort for every sorrow, healing for every wound, provision for every day. "For *me,*" so insignificant, unworthy, so bad; for me, whose iniquities have darkened the blue heavens; for me, a slave of sin.

"Why was I made to hear Thy voice
And enter while there's room,
While thousands made a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?
'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That gently forced me in,
Else I had still refused to taste,
And perished in my sin."

—*F. Harper, M.A.*

The Love of the Son of God to Men.

I. **The existence of this amazing affection.**—Let not the strangeness of the love stagger us into doubt or disbelief, but let us receive and rest in the revealed fact. Viewed from the side of the divine, it is affection from a superior towards those vastly inferior. Viewed from the side of the human beings beloved, it is an affection altogether undeserved. The contrast between His dignity and our demerit is the background on which His love stands out conspicuously.

II. **The proof of affection He gave.**—Not left to assertion or speculation, but proved by a public act. What He *did* expresses what He felt. He showed it openly by self-denial and self-surrender. He gave not His substance or possessions, not another being, but to procure our salvation and express His love He delivered up His own person.

III. **The personality or individuality of the affection.**—He died for all and for each. His love to each human being might be inferred from that to the whole race, but it is affirmed directly. Each singly had a distinct place in His loving death. Each was a unit before Him, and had a personal interest in His affection.—*W. Smiley, B.A.*

The Life of Faith.

I. **The life which the apostle lived in the flesh.**—1. *His whole life was a life of religious decision.* He made his choice and never faltered in it. He saw what he had to do, and he began to do it at once. He allowed no parley with the enemy. Nor was this resolution fleeting; it continued through life.

2. *His life was marked by a solemn regard and care for his own personal salvation.*—There are two sources of religious danger of which we are not always sufficiently aware—zeal for doctrinal truth, and active employment in promoting the spread of truth. How possible it is that, through the treachery of our hearts, even these may be allowed insensibly to sap the very foundations of that solemn fear, as to our own selves, which ought to influence us! Remember that truth is not the substance of salvation, but its instrument. Water others, but neglect not your own vineyard.

3. *His life was truly a life of devotion.*—His was a life of prayer. Philosophy asks for a reason for the efficacy of prayer, and, waiting for an answer, never prays at all. Religion hears

that God will be inquired of by us, thankfully bends the knee, touches the golden sceptre, and bears away the blessing. We always want; we must always pray. And wish we for a model of high aspiration in prayer? Let the apostle elevate and expand our languid desires.

4. *His life was one of heavenly-mindedness.*—He lived indeed in the flesh, but his life was in heaven. Heavenly-mindedness is the result of three things—an assurance of present acceptance with God, habitual intercourse with Him through His Son, and the extinction of the worldly spirit. Our fears and aversions result from principles directly opposite.

5. *His life was one of cheerful submission to providential appointments.*—His was no life of envied ease. In every city bonds and afflictions awaited him. These dispensations operated on a tender and delicate mind, for in him were united great energy and great tenderness. Yet this man, hunted like a beast of prey, always preserves and exhibits a contented cheerfulness. There was no sorrow for himself, none allowed to others for him. The principle itself reason could not furnish; but when furnished it is seen to be most reasonable.

6. *His life was one of laborious usefulness.*—He lived not to himself, but to Christ Jesus his Lord, in the promotion of His will in the moral benefit and eternal salvation of men. This was the life he lived in the flesh, even to spread the light and influence of the gospel to all.

II. **The principle and source of his life.**—1. *It is Christian faith.* Its object, the Son of God. It receives His words as true, and regards Him as an atoning sacrifice. "He gave Himself for me."

2. *In its nature it is confiding and appropriating.*—How does faith connect itself with the results stated? (1) It regenerates as well as justifies. (2) It produces vital union with Christ. (3) It is habitual in its exercise. (4) It is realising. It gives a spiritual apprehension of invisible and eternal realities.—*R. Watson.*

Self-abolished and Replaced.—Caroline Herschel, the sister of the great astronomer, was through all her life the most attached servant of her brother. She called herself "a mere tool, which my brother had the trouble of sharpening." She learned the details of observing with such success that she independently discovered eight comets. Her devotion was most complete. Wherever her brother was concerned she abolished self and replaced her nature with his. Having no taste for astronomy, her work at first was distasteful to her; but she conquered this, and lived to help his work and fame.

Ver. 21. *The Perils of False Teaching.*

I. **It seeks to base personal righteousness on an effete legalism.**—"If righteousness come by the law."

II. **It defeats the gracious purposes of God.**—"I do not frustrate the grace of God."

III. **It renders the sacrifice of Christ nugatory.**—"Then Christ is dead in vain."

Frustrating Divine Grace.—1. The joining of works with faith in the matter of justification is a total excluding of God's free grace and favour from any hand in the work. Grace admits of no partner. If grace does not all, it does nothing; if anything be added, that addition makes grace to be no grace. 2. That the apostle doth exclude in this dispute from having any influence in justification the works, not only of the ceremonial but also of the moral law, appears from this—that he opposes the merit of Christ's death to all merit of our own, whether by obedience to the one law or the other. 3. If there had been any other way possible by which the salvation of sinners could have been brought about but by the death of Christ, then Christ would not have died. To suppose Christ died in vain or without cause is an absurdity. If justification

could have been attained by works or any other means, then His death had been in vain, and it were an absurd thing to suppose He would have died in that case.—*Fergusson.*

Justification by Works makes Void the Grace of God.

I. **Grace must stand wholly and entirely in itself.**—God's grace cannot stand with man's merit. Grace is no grace unless it be freely given every way. Grace and works of grace in the causing of justification can no more stand together than fire and water.

II. The apostle answers the objection **that if a sinner is justified only by faith in Christ then we abolish the grace of God.**—He shows that if we be justified by our own fulfilment of the law then Christ died in vain to fulfil the law for us.

III. **We have here a notable ground of true religion.**—That the death of Christ is made void if anything be joined with it in the work of our justification as a means to satisfy God's justice and to merit the favour of God. Therefore the doctrine of justification by works is a manifest error.—*Perkins.*

CHAPTER III.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Who hath bewitched you?**—Fascinated you, as if overlooked by the evil eye, so that your brain is confused. The Galatians were reputed to possess acute intellects: the apostle marvelled the more at their defection. **That ye should not obey the truth.**—Omitted in R.V. **Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified.**—In preaching, a vivid portraiture of Christ crucified has been set before you as if depicted in graphic characters impossible to mistake.

Ver. 3. **Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?**—What monstrous folly is this! Will you so violate the divine order of progress? The flesh may be easily mistaken for the Spirit, even by those who have made progress, unless they continue to maintain a pure faith (*Bengel*).

Ver. 4. **Have ye suffered so many things in vain?**—Since ye might have avoided them by professing Judaism. Will ye lose the reward promised for all suffering?

Ver. 5. **He that worketh miracles among you.**—In you, at your conversion and since.

Ver. 6. **Even as Abraham believed God.**—Where justification is there the Spirit is, so that if the former comes by faith the latter must also.

Ver. 8. **Preached before the gospel unto Abraham.**—Thus the gospel in its essential germ is older than the law, though the full development of the former is subsequent to the latter. The promise to Abraham was an anticipation of the gospel, not only as announcing the Messiah, but also as involving the doctrine of righteousness by faith.

Ver. 10. **As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.**—This the Scripture itself declares. It utters an anathema against all who fail to fulfil every single ordinance contained in the book of the law (Deut. xxvii. 26).

Ver. 13. **Christ hath redeemed us from the curse.**—Bought us off from our bondage and from the curse under which all lie who trust to the law. The ransom price He paid was His own precious blood (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). **Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.**—Christ's bearing the particular curse of hanging on the tree is a sample of the general curse which He representatively bore. Not that the Jews put to death malefactors by hanging, but after having put them to death otherwise, in order to brand them with peculiar ignominy, they hung the bodies on a tree, and such malefactors were accursed by the law. The Jews in contempt called Him *the hanged one.* Hung between heaven and earth as though unworthy of either.

Ver. 17. **The covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law cannot disannul.**—From the recognised inviolability of a human covenant (ver. 15), the apostle argues the impossibility of violating the divine covenant. The law cannot set aside the promise.

Ver. 19. **Wherefore then serveth the law?**—As it is of no avail for justification, is it either useless or contrary to the covenant of God? **It was added because of transgressions.**

—To bring out into clearer view the transgressions of the law; to make men more fully conscious of their sins, by being perceived as transgressions of the law, and so make them long for the promised Saviour. **It was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator.**—As instrumental enactors of the law. In the giving of the law the angels were representatives of God; Moses, as mediator, represented the people.

Ver. 20. **Now a Mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.**—The very idea of mediation supposes two persons at least, between whom the mediation is carried on. The law then is of the nature of a contract between two parties—God on the one hand, and the Jewish people on the other. It is only valid so long as both parties fulfil the terms of the contract. It is therefore contingent and not absolute. Unlike the law, the promise is absolute and unconditional. It depends on the sole decree of God. There are not two contracting parties. There is nothing of the nature of a stipulation. The Giver is everything, the recipient nothing (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 22. **The Scripture hath concluded all under sin.**—The written letter was needed so as permanently to convict man of disobedience to God's command. He is shut up under condemnation as in a prison.

Ver. 24. **The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.**—As a tutor, checking our sinful propensities, making the consciousness of the sinful principle more vivid, and showing the need of forgiveness and freedom from the bondage of sin.

Ver. 26. **Ye are all the children of God.**—No longer children requiring a tutor, but sons emancipated and walking at liberty.

Ver. 28. **Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.**—No class privileged above another, as the Jews under the law had been above the Gentiles. Difference of sex makes no difference in Christian privileges. But under the law the male sex had great privileges.

Ver. 29. **If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs.**—Christ is Abraham's seed, and all who are baptised into Christ, put on Christ (ver. 27), and are one in Christ (ver. 28), are children entitled to the inheritance of promise.

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

The Deceptive Glamour of Error—

I. **Diverts the gaze of the soul from the most suggestive truth.**—"Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified" (ver. 1). The cross of Christ was the great theme of Paul's preaching. He depicted it in such vivid colours, and dwelt on every detail of the story with such intense earnestness and loving emphasis, that the Galatians were arrested, excited, charmed. They were smitten with a sense of sin. They seemed to be actors in the scene, as if their own hands had driven in the nails that pierced the sacred Victim. They were bowed with shame and humiliation, and in an agony of repentance they cast themselves before the Crucified and took Him for their Christ and King. While they looked to Jesus they were secure, but when they listened to the deceptive voice of error their gaze was diverted and the deep significance of the cross became obscured. Then backsliding began. Like mariners losing sight of their guiding star, they drifted into strange waters. The cross is the central force of Christianity; when it fades from view Christianity declines. "As the sun draws the vapours of the sea, and then paints a rainbow on them, so Christ draws men and then glorifies them. His attraction is like that of the sun. It is magnetic too, like that of the magnet to the pole. It is not simply the Christ that is the magnet; it is the crucified Christ. It is not Christ without the cross, nor the cross without Christ; it is both of them together."

II. **Confuses the mind as to the nature and value of spiritual agencies.**—1. *Concerning the method of their first reception.*—"Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (ver. 2). Making it appear that spiritual blessings were acquired by outward observance rather than by inward contemplation and faith. Confusing the true method of moral regeneration, it arrests all growth and advancement in the spiritual life. It throws back the soul on the weary round of toilsome and hopeless human effort.

2. *Concerning the purpose for which they were given.*—"Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (ver. 3). It was a reversal of

the divine order. Having begun in the Spirit, so they must continue, or they would be undone. It was absurd to look for perfection in the flesh, especially when they had discovered its helplessness and misery. Pharisaic ordinances could do nothing to consummate the work of faith and love; Moses could not lead them higher than Christ; circumcision could never effect what the Holy Ghost failed to do. Spiritual results can be brought about only by spiritual agencies.

3. *Rendering suffering on behalf of the truth meaningless.*—"Have ye suffered so many things in vain?" (ver. 4). The Galatians on their conversion were exposed to the fiercest persecution from the Jews and from their own countrymen incited by the Jews. No one could come out of heathen society and espouse the cause of Christ in those days, nor can he do so to-day, without making himself a mark for ridicule and violence, without the rupture of family and public ties, and many painful sacrifices. But if the truth may be so easily abandoned, all early struggles against opposition and all the educative influence and promised reward of suffering must go for nothing. It is disappointing and disastrous when a youthful zeal for religion degenerates in maturer life into apathy and worldliness, when the great principles of right and liberty, for which our fathers fought and suffered, are treated by their descendants with supine indifference.

III. **Creates misconceptions as to the divine method of ministering spiritual blessing.**—"He that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (ver. 5). One of the most subtle effects of error is to suspend the mind in a state of hesitation and doubt. It is a dangerous mood. Confidence in the truth is shaken, and for the moment the soul has nothing stable on which to lay hold. It is the opportunity for the enemy, and damage is done which even a subsequent return to the truth does not wholly efface. Paul saw the peril of his converts, and he suggests this test—the Spirit of God had put His seal on the apostle's preaching and on the faith of his hearers. Did any such manifestation accompany the preaching of the legalists? He takes his stand on the indubitable evidence of the work of the Spirit. It is the only safe ground for the champion of experimental Christianity (1 Cor. ii. 14, 15).

Lessons.—1. *Every error is the distortion of some truth.* 2. *The cross is the central truth of Christianity.* 3. *The highest truths are spiritually discerned.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. *Faithful Reproof.*—1. The minister when he is called to insist upon the clearing up of truth, whether positively by showing what is revealed in Scripture or controversially by refuting errors, should mix his discourse with exhortation and reproof, to excite and quicken the affections of his hearers. 2. False teachers, who by fair words deceive the simple, are spiritual sorcerers, and error is spiritual witchcraft. As sorcerers by deluding the senses make people apprehend that they see what they see not, so false teachers, by casting a mist of seeming reason before the understanding, delude it, and make the deluded person to believe that to be truth which is not. 3. Though Christ and His sufferings are to be vividly represented and pictured by the plain and powerful preaching of the gospel, yet it does not follow they are to be artificially painted with colours on stone or timber for religious use. The graven image is a teacher of lies (Hab. ii. 18).—*Fergusson.*

The Folly of Disobedience.

I. **We are wise in matters of the world, but in matters concerning the kingdom of heaven the most of us are fools,** besotted and bewitched with worldly cares and pleasures, without

sense in matters of religion; like a piece of wax without form, fit to take the form and print of any religion.

II. **The truth here mentioned is the heavenly doctrine of the gospel,** so called because it is absolute truth without error, and because it is a most worthy truth—the truth according to godliness.

III. **The office of the minister is to set forth Christ crucified.**—1. The ministry of the word must be plain, perspicuous, and evident, as if the doctrine were pictured and painted out before the eyes of men. 2. It must be powerful and lively in operation, and as it were crucifying Christ within us and causing us to feel the virtue of His passion. The word preached must pierce into the heart like a two-edged sword. 3. The effectual and powerful preaching of the word stands in three things: (1) True and proper interpretation of the Scripture. (2) Savoury and wholesome doctrine gathered out of the Scriptures truly expounded. (3) The application of the said doctrine, either to the information of the judgment or the reformation of the life.

IV. **The duty of all believers is to behold Christ crucified.**—And we must behold Him by the eye of faith, which makes us both see Him and feel Him, as it were, crucified in us. 1. By beholding Christ crucified we see our misery and wickedness. 2. This sight brings us true and lively comfort. 3. This sight of Christ makes a wonderful change in us. The chameleon takes the colours of the things it sees and that are near to it; and the believing heart takes to it the disposition and mind that was in Christ.—*Perkins.*

Attractiveness of Worth.—In the Paris Salon some few years ago there was a bust of the painter Baudry by Paul Dubois, one of the greatest modern sculptors. Mr. Edmund Gosse was sitting to contemplate this bust when an American gentleman strolled by, caught sight of it, and after hovering round it for some time came and sat by his side and watched it. Presently he turned to Mr. Gosse inquiring if he could tell him whose it was, and whether it was thought much of, adding with a charming modesty, "I don't know anything about art; but I found that I could not get past that head." Would that we could so set forth Christ that His word might be fulfilled, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me"!

Vers. 2-5. *Searching Questions*—1. As to the mode of receiving the Spirit (ver. 2). 2. As to the folly of expecting advancement by substituting an inferior for a superior force (ver. 3). 3. As to the uselessness of suffering (ver. 4). 4. As to the exercise of spiritual and miraculous power (ver. 5).

Ver. 4. *Suffering for the Truth.*—1. They may suffer many things for truth who afterwards fall from it. As the example of others, particular interest and general applause will make even hypocrites suffer much, so continued suffering will make even the godly faint for a time. The best, being left to themselves, in an hour of temptation, will turn their back upon truth, so that no profession, no experience or remembrance of the joy and sweetness found in the way of truth, nor their former sufferings for it, will make them adhere to it. 2. Whatever have been the sufferings for truth, they are all in vain, lost and to no purpose, if the party make defection from and turn his back upon the truth. 3. Though those who have suffered much for the truth should afterwards fall from it, we are to keep charity towards them, hoping God will give them repentance and reclaim them. All our sharpness towards them ought to be wisely tempered, by expressing the charitable thoughts we have of them.—*Fergusson.*

The Uses of Suffering.—1. They serve for trial of men, that it may appear what is hidden in their hearts. 2. They serve for the correction of

things amiss in us. 3. They serve as documents and warnings to others, especially in public persons. 4. They are marks of adoption, if we be content to obey God in them. 5. They are the trodden and beaten way to the kingdom of heaven.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 5. *Miracles confirmatory of the Truth.*—1. The Lord accompanied the first preaching of the gospel with the working of miracles that the truth of the doctrine might be confirmed, which being once sufficiently done, there is no further use for miracles. 2. So strong and prevalent is the spirit of error, and so weak the best in themselves to resist it, that for love to error they will quit truth, though confirmed and sealed by the saving fruits of God's Spirit in their hearts.—*Fergusson.*

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

The Abrahamic Gospel—

I. **Recognised the principle that righteousness is only by faith.**—"Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness" (ver. 6). The promise to Abraham contained the germ of the gospel, and was the only gospel known to pre-Christian times. Though dimly apprehending its vast import, Abraham trusted in God's Messianic promise, and his unfaltering faith, often severely tried, was in the judgment of the gracious God imputed to him as rectitude. "In this mode of salvation there was after all nothing new. The righteousness of faith is more ancient than legalism. It is as old as Abraham. In the hoary patriarchal days as now, in the time of promise as of fulfilment, faith is the root of religion; grace invites, righteousness waits upon the hearing of faith."

II. **Was universal in its spiritual provisions.**—"The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed" (ver. 8). Twice is Abraham designated "the friend of God." The Arabs still call him *the friend.* His image has impressed itself with singular force on the Oriental mind. He is the noblest figure of the Old Testament, surpassing Isaac in force, Jacob in purity, and both in dignity of character. His religion exhibits a heroic strength and firmness, but at the same time a large-hearted, genial humanity, an elevation and serenity of mind, to which the temper of those who boasted themselves his children was utterly opposed. Father of the Jewish race, Abraham was no Jew. He stands before us in the morning light of revelation a simple, noble, archaic type of man, true father of many nations. And his faith was the secret of the greatness which has commanded for him the reverence of four thousand years. His trust in God made him worthy to receive so immense a trust for the future of mankind (*Findlay*).

III. **Shares its privilege and blessing with all who believe.**—"They which are of faith, the same are the children of . . . are blessed with faithful Abraham" (vers. 7, 9). With Abraham's faith the Gentiles inherit his blessing. They were not simply blessed *in* him, through his faith which received and handed down the blessing, but blessed *with* him. Their righteousness rests on the same principle as his. Reading the story of Abraham, we witness the bright dawn of faith, its springtime of promise and of hope. These morning hours passed away; and the sacred history shuts us in to the hard school of Mosaism, with its isolation, its mechanical routine and ritual drapery, its yoke of legal exaction ever growing more burdensome. Of all this the Church of Christ was to know nothing. It was called to enter into the labours of the legal centuries without the need of sharing their burdens. In the "Father of the Faithful" and the "Friend of God" Gentile believers were to see their exemplar, to find the warrant

for that sufficiency and freedom of faith of which the natural children of Abraham unjustly strove to rob them (*Findlay*).

Lessons.—1. *The gospel has an honourable antiquity.* 2. *Righteousness is the practical side of true religion.* 3. *Faith is the way to righteousness.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 6-9. *Righteousness through Faith.*

I. **The divine method of blessing in past ages** (ver. 6).

II. **Modern believers are spiritual successors of the most eminent examples of faith in ancient times** (ver. 7).

III. **The unchanging gospel taught in Holy Scripture** (ver. 8).

IV. **Ensures the enjoyment of promised blessings** (ver. 9).

Vers. 6, 7. *Imitators of Abraham's Faith.*

I. **We must have knowledge of the main and principal promise touching the blessing of God in Christ**, and all other promises depending on the principal; and we must know the scope and tenor of them that we be not deceived.

II. **We must with Abraham believe the truth and power of God** in the accomplishment of the said promises, or in the working of our vocation, justification, sanctification, glorification.

III. **We must by faith obey God** in all things, shutting our eyes and suffering ourselves to be led blindfold, as it were, by the word of God. Thus did Abraham in all things, even in actions against nature. But this practice is rare among us. For there are three things which prevail among us—the love of worldly honour, the love of pleasure, and the love of riches; and where these bear sway there faith takes no place.—*Perkins.*

Vers. 8, 9. *All Nations blessed in Abraham.*—1. The covenant of grace with Abraham extended not only to his carnal seed, but to all believers, even among the Gentiles. 2. The blessings promised to Abraham were not only temporal, but heavenly and spiritual: the temporal were often inculcated on the ancient Church, not as if they were all or the main blessings of the covenant, but as they were shadows of things heavenly. 3. The promise to Abraham contained the sum of the gospel—the glad tidings of all spiritual blessings, and that the Gentiles should have access, in the days of the gospel, to these blessings. The gospel is therefore no new doctrine, but the same in substance with that taught to Abraham and to the Church under the Old Testament. 4. Eminent privileges bestowed on particular persons do not exempt them from walking to heaven in the common pathway with others. Abraham, the father of believers, in whom all nations were blessed, enjoyed the blessing, not because of his own merit, but freely and by faith as well as others.—*Fergusson.*

The Abrahamic Gospel intended for All.

I. **The nation of the Jews shall be called and converted to the participation of this blessing.**—When and how, God knows; but it shall be done before the end of the world. If all nations be called, then the Jews.

II. **That which was foretold to Abraham is verified in our eyes.**—This nation and many other nations are at this day blessed in the seed of Abraham. 1. Give to God thanks and praise that we are born in these days. 2. We must amend and turn to God that we may now be partakers of the promised blessing. 3. We must bless all, do good to all, and hurt to none.

III. **All men who are of Abraham's faith shall be partakers of the same blessing with him.**—God respects not the greatness of our faith so much as the truth of it.—*Perkins.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 10—14.

The Conflict between the Law and Faith.

I. **The law condemns the least violation of its enactments.**—"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things . . . in the law to do them" (ver. 10). The law is a unity; to violate a part is to violate the whole. It is like a perfect bell, every stroke resounds through every atom of the metal. If the bell is fractured in the least degree, the dissonance is evident in every part. Law is so all-pervasive and so perfect that to break one law is to be guilty of all. It is intolerant of all imperfection, and makes no provision to prevent or repair imperfection except by a rigid obedience to every statute. If obedience could be perfect from this moment onwards, the past disobedience would not be condoned; we should be still liable to its penalties, still be under the curse. To pledge ourselves to unsinning obedience is to pledge ourselves to the impossible. All our efforts to obey law—to conform our life to the law of righteousness, the purity and beauty of which we perceive even while in a state of lawless unnature—are futile. It is like running alongside a parallel pathway into which we are perpetually trying to turn ourselves, but all in vain. We cannot escape the condemnation of the disobedient.

II. **The law cannot justify man.**—"But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith" (ver. 11). The law reveals our sin and our utter helplessness to rid ourselves of its misery. The law forces out the disease that is spreading under the skin. Such is its task. But healing it does not bring. "The law," says Luther, "is that which lays down what man is to do; the gospel reveals whence man is to obtain help. When I place myself in the hands of the physician, one branch of art says where the disease lies, another what course to take to get quit of it. So here. The law discovers our disease, the gospel supplies the remedy." We become aware in critical moments that our evil desires are more powerful than the prohibition of law, and are in truth first stirred up thoroughly by the prohibition. And this disposition of our heart is the decisive point for the question, Whether then the holy law, the holy, just, and good commandment makes us holy, just, and good men? The answer to this is, and remains a most decided, No.

III. **The law ignores faith.**—"The law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them" (ver. 12). Its dictum is *do*, not *believe*; it takes no account of faith. To grant righteousness to faith is to deny it to legal works. The two ways have different starting-points, as they lead to opposite goals. From faith one marches through God's righteousness to blessing; from works, through self-righteousness, to the curse. In short, the legalist tries to make God believe in him. Abraham and Paul are content to believe in God. Paul puts the calm, grand image of Father Abraham before us for our pattern, in contrast with the narrow, painful, bitter spirit of Jewish legalism, inwardly self-condemned.

IV. **The law, the great barrier to man's justification, is done away in Christ.**—"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law" (ver. 13). Christ brought us out of the curse of the law by Himself voluntarily undergoing its penalty and submitting to the utmost indignity it imposed—hanging on a tree. It was this crowning scandal that shocked the Jewish pride and made the cross an offence to them. Once crucified, the name of Jesus would surely perish from the lips of men; no Jew would hereafter dare to profess faith in Him. This was God's method of rescue; and all the terrors and penalties of law disappear, being absorbed in the cross of Christ. His redemption was offered to the Jew first. But not to the Jew alone, nor as a Jew. The time of release had come for all men. Abraham's blessing, long withheld, was now to be imparted, as it had been promised, to all the tribes of the earth. In the removal of the legal

curse, God comes near to men as in the ancient days. In Christ Jesus crucified, risen, reigning, a new world comes into being, which restores and surpasses the promise of the old.

V. **Faith ends the conflict with law by imparting to man a superior spiritual force.**—"That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (ver. 14). Faith is a spiritual faculty, and its exercise is made possible by the operation of the Holy Spirit. The law of works is superseded by the higher law of the Spirit. It is in the human soul that law has its widest sweep and accomplishes its highest results. The soul can never rise higher in its experience and efforts than the law by which it is governed. The law of sin has debased and limited the soul, and only as it is united by faith to Christ and responds to the lofty calls of His law will it break away from the corruption and restraints of the law of sin and rise to the highest perfection of holiness. "In every law," says F. W. Robertson, "there is a spirit, in every maxim a principle; and the law and the maxim are laid down for the sake of conserving the spirit and the principle which they enshrine. Man is severed from submission to the maxim because he has got allegiance to the principle. He is free from the rule and the law because he has got the spirit written in his heart."

Lessons.—1. *It is hopeless to attain righteousness by law.* 2. *Faith in Christ is the only and universal way of obedience.* 3. *The law is disarmed by obeying it.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 10-12. *The Inexorability of Law.*

I. **The law renders no help in fulfilling its requirements, but curses the incompetent** (ver. 10).

II. **The law, though strictly observed, is powerless to justify** (ver. 11).

III. **The law does not admit of faith; it offers life only to the doer** (ver. 12).

Ver. 11. *Man is justified by Faith alone.*—One day wishing to obtain an indulgence promised by the Pope to all who should ascend on their knees what is called Pilate's Staircase, the poor Saxon monk, Luther, was humbly creeping up those steps when he thought he heard a voice of thunder crying from the bottom of his heart, as at Wittenberg and Bologna, "The just shall live by faith!" He rises in amazement, he shudders at himself, he is ashamed of seeing to what a depth superstition had plunged him. He flies from the scene of his folly. It was in these words God then said, "Let there be light, and there was light."—*D'Aubigné.*

Ver. 12. *The Difference between the Law and the Gospel.*

I. **The law promises life to him who performs perfect obedience,** and that for his works. The gospel promises life to him who doeth nothing in the cause of his salvation, but only believes in Christ; and it promises salvation to him who believeth, yet not for his faith or for any works else, but for the merit of Christ. The law then requires doing to salvation, and the gospel believing and nothing else.

II. **The law does not teach true repentance,** neither is it any cause of it, but only an occasion. The gospel only prescribes repentance and the practice of it, yet only as it is a fruit of our faith and as it is the way to salvation.

III. **The law requires faith in God,** which is to put our affiance in Him. The gospel requires faith in Christ, the Mediator God-man; and this faith the law never knew.

IV. **The promises of the gospel are not made to the work, but to the worker;** and to the worker not for his work, but for Christ's sake, according to his work.

V. **The gospel considers not faith as a virtue or work, but as an instrument,** or hand, to apprehend Christ. Faith does not cause or procure our salvation, but as the beggar's hand it receives it, being wholly wrought and given of God.

VI. **This distinction of the law and the gospel must be observed carefully,** as the two have been often confounded. It has been erroneously stated that the law of Moses, written in tables of stone, is the law; the same law of Moses, written in the hearts of men by the Holy Ghost, is the gospel. But I say again that the law written in our hearts is still the law of Moses. This oversight in mistaking the distinction of the law and the gospel is and has been the ruin of the gospel.—*Perkins.*

Vers. 13, 14. *Redemption and its Issues.*

I. **Redemption was effected by Christ enduring the penalty of violated law** (ver. 13).

II. **Redemption by Christ has brought blessing to all nations.**—"That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ" (ver. 14).

III. **The spiritual results of redemption are realised only by faith.**—"That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (ver. 14).

Ver. 13. *The Curse and Sentence of the Law* lies on record against sinners, it puts in its demand against our acquittance, and lays an obligation upon us unto punishment. God will not reject nor destroy His law. Unless it be answered, there is no acceptance for sinners. Christ answered the curse of the law when He was made a curse for us, and so became, as to the obedience of the law, the end of the law for righteousness to them that believe. And as to the penalty that it threatened, He bore it, removed it, and took it out of the way. So hath He made way for forgiveness through the very heart of the law; it hath not one word to speak against the pardon of those who believe.—*John Owen.*

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

The Divine Covenant of Promise—

I. **Is less susceptible of violation than any human covenant.**—"Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed [approved], no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto" (ver. 15). Common equity demands that a contract made between man and man is thoroughly binding, and should be rigidly observed; and the civil law lends all its force to maintain the integrity of its clauses. How much more certain it is that the divine covenant shall be faithfully upheld. If it is likely that a human covenant will not be interfered with, it is less likely the divine covenant will be changed. Yet even a human covenant may fail; the divine covenant never. It is based on the divine word which cannot fail, and its validity is pledged by the incorruptibility of the divine character (Mal. iii. 6).

II. **Is explicit in defining the channel of its fulfilment.**—"Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made; . . . to thy seed, which is Christ" (ver. 16). The promise is in the plural because the same promise was often repeated (Gen. xii. 3, 7, xv. 5, 18, xvii. 7, xxii. 18), and because it involved many things—earthly blessings to the literal children of Abraham in Canaan, and spiritual and heavenly blessings to his spiritual children; and both promised to Christ—the Seed and representative Head of the literal and spiritual Israel alike. Therefore the promise that in him "all families of the earth shall be blessed" joins in this one Seed—Christ—Jew and Gentile, as fellow-heirs on the same terms of acceptability—by grace through faith; not to some by promise, to others by the law, but to all alike, circumcised and uncircumcised, constituting but one

seed in Christ. The law, on the other hand, contemplates the Jews and Gentiles as distinct seeds. God makes a covenant, but it is one of promise; whereas the law is a covenant of works. God makes His covenant of promise with the one Seed—Christ—and embraces others only as they are identified with and represented by Him (*Fausset*).

III. **Cannot be set aside by the law which was a subsequent revelation.**—"The covenant, . . . the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul" (ver. 17). The promise to Abraham was a prior settlement, and must take precedence, not only in time but also in authority, of the Mosaic law. It was a bold stroke of the apostle to thus shatter the supremacy of Mosaism; but the appeal to antiquity was an argument the most prejudiced Jew was bound to respect. "The law of Moses has its rights; it must be taken into account as well as the promise to Abraham. True; but it has no power to cancel or restrict the promise, older by four centuries and a half. The later must be adjusted to the earlier dispensation, the law interpreted by the promise. God has not made two testaments—the one solemnly committed to the faith and hope of mankind, only to be retracted and substituted by something of a different stamp. He could not thus stultify Himself. And we must not apply the Mosaic enactments, addressed to a single people, in such a way as to neutralise the original provisions made for the race at large. Our human instincts of good faith, our reverence for public compacts and established rights, forbid our allowing the law of Moses to trench upon the inheritance assured to mankind in the covenant of Abraham" (*Findlay*).

IV. **Imposed no conditions of legal obedience.**—"If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise" (ver. 18). The law is a system of conditions—so much advantage to be gained by so much work done. This is all very well as a general principle. But the promise of God is based on a very different ground. It is an act of free, sovereign grace, engaging to confer certain blessings without demanding anything more from the recipient than faith, which is just the will to receive. The law imposes obligations man is incompetent to meet. The promise offers blessings all men need and all may accept. It simply asks the acceptance of the blessings by a submissive and trustful heart. The demands of the law are met and the provisions of the covenant of promise enjoyed by an act of faith.

Lessons.—1. *God has a sovereign right to give or withhold blessing.* 2. *The divine covenant of promise is incapable of violation.* 3. *Faith in God is the simplest and sublimest method of obedience.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 15-18. *The Promise a Covenant confirmed.*

I. **The promises made to Abraham are first made to Christ, and then in Christ to all that believe in Him.**—1. Learn the difference of the promises of the law and the gospel. The promises of the law are directed and made to the person of every man particularly; the promises of the gospel are first directed and made to Christ, and then by consequent to them that are by faith ingrafted into Christ. 2. We learn to acknowledge the communion that is between Christ and us. Christ died upon the cross, not as a private person, but as a public person representing His people. All died in Him, and with Him; in the same manner they must rise with Him to life. 3. Here is comfort against the consideration of our unworthiness. There is dignity and worthiness sufficient in Him. Our salvation stands in this, not that we know and apprehend Him, but that He knows and apprehends us first of all.

II. **The promise made to Abraham**

was a covenant confirmed by oath.—Abraham in the first making and in the confirmation thereof must be considered as a public person representing all the faithful. Here we see God's goodness. We are bound simply to believe His bare word; yet in regard of our weakness He ratifies His promise by oath, that there might be no occasion of unbelief. What can we more require of Him?

III. **If the promise might be disannulled, the law could not do it.**—1. The promise, or covenant, was made with Abraham, and continued by God four hundred and thirty years before the law was given. 2. If the law abolish the promise, then the inheritance must come by the law. But that cannot be. If the inheritance of eternal life be by the law, it is no more by the promise. But it is by the promise, because God gave it unto Abraham freely by promise; therefore it comes not by the law. This giving was no private but a public donation. That which was given to Abraham was in him given to all that should believe as he did.—*Perkins.*

Vers. 15-17. *Divine and Human Covenants.*

I. A covenant, as between man and man, is honourably binding (ver. 15).

II. The divine covenant made to Abraham ensures the fulfilment of promises to all who believe as Abraham did (ver. 16).

III. The law cannot abrogate the divine covenant of promise (ver. 17).

Ver. 18. *Law and Promise.*—1. So subtle is the spirit of error that it will seem to cede somewhat to truth, intending to prejudice the truth more than if it had ceded nothing. The opposers of justification by faith did sometimes give faith some place in justification, and pleaded for a joint influence of works and faith, of law and promise. 2. The state of grace here and glory hereafter is the inheritance of the Lord's people, of which the land of Canaan was a type. There are only two ways of attaining a right to this inheritance—one by law, the other by promise. 3. There can be no mixture of these two, so that a right to heaven should be obtained partly by the merit of works and partly by faith in the promise. The only way of attaining it is by God's free gift, without the merit of works.—*Fergusson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 19, 20.

The Inferiority of the Law.

I. **It did not justify but condemn the sinner by revealing his sin.**—"It was added because of transgressions" (ver. 19). Law has no remedial efficacy. It reveals and emphasises the fact of sin. It has no terror while it is obeyed. When it is violated then it thunders, and with pitiless severity terrifies the conscience and inflicts unsparing punishment. There is no strain of mercy in its voice, or in the inflexibility of its methods. It surrenders the condemned to an anguish from which it offers no means of escape. It is said that, after the murder of Darnley, some of the wretches who were concerned in it were found wandering about the streets of Edinburgh crying penitently and lamentably for vengeance on those who had caused them to shed innocent blood.

II. **It was temporary in its operation.**—"Till the seed should come to whom the promise was made" (ver. 19). The work of the law was preparatory and educative. Centuries rolled away and the promised Seed was long in coming, and it seemed as if the world must remain for ever under the tutelage of the law. All the time the law was doing its work. God was long in fulfilling His promise because man was so slow to learn. When Christ, the promised Seed, appeared, the law was superseded. Its work was done. The preparatory gave

place to the permanent; the reign of law was displaced by the reign of grace. The claims of the law were discharged once for all.

III. **Its revelation was through intermediaries.**—"It was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator" (ver. 19). In the Jewish estimation the administration of the law by angels enhanced its splendour, and the pomp and ceremony with which Moses made known the will and character of Jehovah added to the impressiveness and superiority of the law. In the Christian view these very methods were evidences of defect and inferiority. The revelations of God by the law were veiled and intermediate; the revelation by grace is direct and immediate. Under the law God was a distant and obscured personality, and the people unfit to enter His sacred presence; by the gospel God is brought near to man, and permitted to bask in the radiance of His revealed glory, without the intervention of a human mediator. The law, with its elaborate ceremonial and multiplied exactions, is a barrier between the soul and God.

IV. **It was contingent, not absolute, in its primal terms.**—"Now a Mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one" (ver. 20). Where a mediator is necessary unity is wanting—not simply in a numerical but in a moral sense, as matter of feeling and of aim. There are separate interests, discordant views, to be consulted. This was true of Mosaism. It was not the absolute religion. The theocratic legislation of the Pentateuch is lacking in the unity and consistency of a perfect revelation. Its disclosures of God were refracted in a manifest degree by the atmosphere through which they passed. In the promise God spoke immediately and for Himself. The man of Abraham's faith sees God in His unity. The legalist gets his religion at second-hand, mixed with undivine elements. He projects on the divine image confusing shadows of human imperfection (*Findlay*).

Lessons.—1. *The law is powerless to remove the sin it exposes.* 2. *The law had the defect of all preparatory dispensations.* 3. *The law imposes conditions it does not help to fulfil.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 19, 20. *The Law is for Transgressors.*

I. **We are taught to examine and search our hearts by the law of God.**—1. When any sin is forbidden in any commandment of the law, under it all sins of the same kind are forbidden, all causes of them and all occasions. 2. A commandment negative includes the affirmative, and binds us not only to abstain from evil, but also to do the contrary good. 3. Every commandment must be understood with a curse annexed to it, though the curse be not expressed. 4. We must especially examine ourselves by the first and last commandments. The first forbids the first motions of our hearts against God, and the last forbids the first motions of our hearts against our neighbour.

II. **The law of God to be reverenced.**—1. Because it was ordained or delivered by angels. 2. We are to fear to break the least commandment, because the angels observe the keepers and breakers of it, and are ready to witness against them that offend. 3. If thou offend and break the law, repent with speed, for that is the desired joy of angels. 4. If thou sin and repent not, look for shame and confusion before God and His angels.

III. **God, the Author and Source of law, is one.**—1. He is unchangeable. 2. His unchangeableness the foundation of our comfort. 3. We should be unchangeable in faith, hope, love, good counsels, honest promises, and in the maintenance of true religion.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 19. *The Use of the Law.*

I. **It is a standard to measure our defects.**

II. **It is a sword to pierce our conscience.**

III. **It is a seal to certify that we are in the way of grace.**—*Tholuck.*

No Trust in Legal Prescriptions.—St. Paul, with the sledge-hammer force of his direct and impassioned dialectics, shattered all possibility of trusting in legal prescriptions, and demonstrated that the law was no longer obligatory on Gentiles. He had shown that the distinction between clean and unclean meats was to the enlightened conscience a matter of indifference, that circumcision was nothing better than a physical mutilation, that ceremonialism was a yoke with which the free, converted Gentile had nothing to do, that we are saved by faith and not by works, that the law was a dispensation of wrath and menace introduced for the sake of transgressions, that so far from being, as all the Rabbis asserted, the one thing on account of which the universe had been created, the Mosaic code only possessed a transitory, subordinate, and intermediate character, coming in, as it were in a secondary way, between the promise to Abraham and the fulfilment of that promise in the gospel of Christ.—*Dean Farrar.*

The Use of the Law under the Gospel.

I. **The law never was intended to supersede the gospel as a means of life.**

II. **The most perfect edition of the gospel, so far from having abolished the least tittle of the moral law, has established it.**

III. **The use of the law.**—1. To constitute probation. 2. The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. 3. The law serves to give beauty and symmetry to the hidden man of the heart. 4. To vindicate the conduct of our Judge in dooming the impenitent to eternal death.

Lessons.—1. *Since the law as a covenant has been superseded by a covenant better adapted to our guilty and helpless circumstances, let us make a proper use of the mercy, acquaint ourselves with its demands, and abound in the holiness it enjoins.* 2. *Mark those who set aside the law, shun their company, and pray for their repentance.*—*Iota.*

Ver. 20. *The Unity of God and His Purpose regarding Man.*—1. The covenant with Adam in his innocency was immediate, no mediator intervening to make them one; there was no disagreement betwixt them because of sin. 2. No man can attain heaven, or reap any advantage, except he be perfectly holy. God made no covenant of works with men on Mount Sinai, nor could they have reaped benefit from such a covenant as they were a sinful people, standing in need of a midsman betwixt God and them. 3. The Lord in all His dispensations is always one, and like to Himself without shadow of turning. If any plead a right to heaven by the merit of their works, God will abate nothing of what He did once prescribe and require of man in the covenant of works.—*Fergusson.*

An Effectual Mediator.—Edward III., after defeating Philip of France at Creçy, laid siege to Calais, which, after an obstinate resistance of a year, was taken. He offered to spare the lives of the inhabitants on condition that six of their principal citizens should be delivered up to him, with halters round their necks, to be immediately executed. When these terms were announced the rulers of the town came together, and the question was proposed, "Who will offer himself as an atonement for the city? Who will imitate Christ who gave Himself for the salvation of men?" The number was soon made up. On reaching the English camp they were received by the soldiers of Edward with every mark of commiseration. They appeared before the king. "Are these the principal inhabitants of Calais?" he inquired sternly. "Of France, my lord," they replied. "Lead them to execution." At this moment the queen arrived. She was informed of the punishment about to be inflicted on the six victims. She hastened to

the king and pleaded for their pardon. At first he sternly refused, but her earnestness conquered, and the king yielded. When we submit our hearts as captives to the Father, and feel that we are condemned and lost, we have an effectual Mediator who stays the hand of justice.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 21—25.

The True Use of the Law—

I. **Was not intended to bestow spiritual life.**—"If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law" (ver. 21). The law was not against the promises. It was a divine method in dealing with man, and one divine method never conflicts with another. It was intended to mediate between the promise and its fulfilment. It is not the enemy but the minister of grace. It did not profess to bestow spiritual life; but in its sacrifices and oblations pointed to the coming Christ who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. x. 4).

II. **Was to reveal the universal domination of sin.**—"The Scripture hath concluded all under sin" (ver. 22). The Bible from the beginning and throughout its course, in its unvarying teaching, makes the world one vast prison-house, with the law for gaoler, and mankind held fast in chains of sin, condemned, and waiting for the punishment of death. Its perpetual refrain is, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Its impeachment covers the whole realm of human life, thought, and desire. "Every human life," says Martensen, "that has not yet become a partaker of redemption is a life under the law, in opposition to the life under grace. The law hovers over his life as an unfulfilled requirement; and, in the depth of his own being, remains as an indismissible but unsatisfied and unexpiated claim on him, which characterises such a human existence as sinful and guilt-laden."

III. **Was to teach the absolute necessity of faith in order to escape its condemnation.**—"But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed" (ver. 23). The law was all the while standing guard over its subjects, watching and checking every attempt to escape, but intending to hand them over in due time to the charge of faith. The law posts its ordinances, like so many sentinels, round the prisoner's cell. The cordon is complete. He tries again and again to break out; the iron circle will not yield. But deliverance will yet be his. The day of faith approaches. It dawned long ago in Abraham's promise. Even now its light shines into his dungeon, and he hears the word of Jesus, "Thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." Law, the stern gaoler, has after all been a good friend if it has reserved him for this. It prevents the sinner escaping to a futile and illusive freedom (*Findlay*).

IV. **Was to act as a moral tutor to train us to the maturity and higher freedom of a personal faith in Christ.**—"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ," etc. (vers. 24, 25). The schoolmaster, or pedagogue, among the Greeks meant a faithful servant entrusted with the care of the boy from childhood, to keep him from evil, physical and moral, and accompany him to his amusements and studies. "If then the law is a pedagogue," says Chrysostom, "it is not hostile to grace, but its fellow-worker; but should it continue to hold us fast when grace has come, then it would be hostile." Judaism was an education for Christianity. It trained the childhood of the race. It humbled and distressed the soul with the consciousness of sin. It revealed the utter inadequacy of all its provisions to justify. It brought the despairing soul to Christ, and showed that the true way to righteousness was by personal faith in Him.

Lessons.—1. *Law is the revealer of sin.* 2. *Law demands universal righteousness.* 3. *Law is a training for faith.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 21, 22. *The Law not contrary to the Divine Promise.*—1. It is the way of some to make one Scripture contradict another, yet their bold allegations will be found always false, and truth to be ever most consonant and never contrary to itself. 2. So exact and full is the righteousness required in order to life, and so far short do all mankind come of it, that no works of our own, done in obedience to the law, can amount to that righteousness. 3. Though all men by nature be under sin, it is a matter of no small difficulty to convince any man of it. The work of the law, accusing, convincing, or condemning the sinner, is compared to the work of a judge detaining a malefactor in prison which is not effectuated but with force and violence. 4. The law by its threatenings prepares and necessitates the soul to embrace salvation by faith in the Christ revealed in the promise.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 22. *The Great Prison; or, All concluded under Sin.*—1. Satan does indeed draw and drive men into sin—this is the accursed work of his restless, sabbathless life; and when he has got them there he binds them fast, and will not let them flee from his toils. He builds a high wall of sin all round them so that they shall not look over it into the goodly land beyond, and here he shuts them up together, sinner with sinner, a never-ending ghastly multitude, that they may encourage and pamper each other in wickedness, and that no example, no voice of holiness, may ever reach and startle them. But God never drove, never drew, any man into sin. He is calling us to come out from the deadly land, from the loathsome, plague-breathing dungeon. So when the Scripture concludes, or shuts all men up together under sin, it is not by driving them into sin, but for the sake of calling them out of it. 2. With all the light of the Scriptures shining around us, with the law of God ever sounding in our ears, and the life of Christ set continually before us, how prone are we to forget our sinfulness, to turn away from the thought of it, to fancy we are as good as we need be, and that, though we might certainly be better, yet it does not matter much! How apt are we still to forget that we are concluded under sin, to forget that we are shut up in a prison! Although the souls of so many millions are lying around us, bloated with the poison of sin, how tardily do we acknowledge that the poison by which they perished must also be deadly to us! 3. Suppose you were to be carried before an earthly court of justice, and that one sweeping accusation were to be brought against you; suppose you were found guilty, and the excuse you set up were the complete proof of your guilt,—what would follow? The judge would straightway pass sentence upon you, and you would be condemned to suffer punishment according to the measure of your offence. And must we not expect that the course of things should be the very same when you are carried before a heavenly court of justice? 4. When a man's eyes are opened to see the prison in which he is shut up, to see and feel the chains that are fast bound round his soul and have eaten into it; when he has learnt to see and know that the pleasures, whatever they may be, of sin are only, like the flesh-pots of Egypt, intoxicating drugs, given to him to deprive him of all sense of his captivity,—then will he long for a deliverer, rejoice on hearing of his approach, hail him when he comes in view, and follow him whithersoever he may lead. As unbelief is the one great universal sin, in which all mankind are concluded, as it is only from having let slip our faith in God

that we have yielded our hearts to the temptations of the world and given ourselves up to its idolatries, so it is only through faith that we can be brought back to God—that we can receive the promise given to those who believe.—*J. C. Hare.*

Ver. 23. "*Shut up unto the faith.*" *The Reasonableness of Faith.*—The mode of conception is military. The law is made to act the part of a sentry, guarding every avenue but one, and that one leads those, who are compelled to take it, to the faith of the gospel. Out of the leading varieties of taste and sentiment which obtain in the present age we may collect something which may be turned into an instrument of conviction for reclaiming men from their delusions and shutting them up to the faith.

I. **There is the school of natural religion.**—It is founded on the competency of the human mind to know God by the exercise of its own faculties, to clothe Him in the attributes of its own demonstration, to serve Him by a worship and a law of its own discovery, and to assign to Him a mode of procedure in the administration of this vast universe upon the strength and plausibility of its own theories. They recognise the judicial government of God over moral and accountable creatures. They hold there is a law. One step more, and they are fairly shut up to the faith. That law has been violated.

II. **There is the school of classical morality.**—It differs from the former school in one leading particular. It does not carry in its speculations so distinct and positive a reference to the Supreme Being. Our duties to God are viewed as a species of moral accomplishment, the effect of which is to exalt and embellish the individual. We ask them to look at man as he is, and compare him with man as they would have him to be. If they find that he falls miserably short of their ideal standard of excellence, what is this but making a principle of their own the instrument of shutting them up unto the faith of the gospel, or at least shutting them up unto one of the most peculiar of its doctrines, the depravity of our nature, or the dismal ravage which the power of sin has made upon the moral constitution of the species? This depravity the gospel proposes to do away.

III. **There is the school of fine feeling and poetical sentiment.**—It differs from the school of morality in this—the one makes virtue its idol because of its rectitude, the other makes virtue its idol because of its beauty, and the process of reasoning by which they are shut up unto the faith is the same in both. However much we may love perfection and aspire after it, yet there is some want, some disease, in the constitution of man which prevents his attainment of it, that there is a feebleness of principle about him, that the energy of his practice does not correspond to the fair promises of his fancy, and however much he may delight in an ideal scene of virtue and moral excellence, there is some lurking malignity in his constitution which, without the operation of that mighty power revealed to us in the gospel, makes it vain to wish and hopeless to aspire after it.—*Dr. Thomas Chalmers.*

Vers. 24, 25. *The Law our Schoolmaster.*—There was a time when God put His world under a schoolmaster; then it would have been preposterous to apply faith. There is a time when a larger spirit has come, and then it would be going back to use law.

I. **The uses of restraint in the heart's education.**—1. *The first use of law is to restrain from open violence.* It is necessary for those who feel the inclination to evil, and so long as the inclination remains so far must a man be under law. Imagine a governor amidst a population of convicts trusting to high principle. Imagine a parent having no fixed hours, no law in his household, no punishment for evil. There is a

morbid feeling against punishment; but it is God's method.

2. *The second use of restraint is to show the inward force of evil.*—A steam-engine at work in a manufactory is so quiet and gentle that a child might put it back. But interpose a bar of iron many inches thick, and it cuts through as if it were so much leather. Introduce a human limb—it whirls round, and the form of man is in one moment a bleeding, mangled, shapeless mass. It is restraint that manifests this unsuspected power. In the same way law discovers the strength of evil in our hearts.

3. *The third use is to form habits of obedience.*—In that profession which is specially one of obedience—the military profession—you cannot mistake the imparted type of character. Immediate, prompt obedience, no questioning "why?" Hence comes their decision of character. Hence, too, their happiness. Would you have your child happy, decided, manly? Teach him to obey. It is an error to teach a child to act on reason, or to expect reasons why a command is given. Better it is that he should obey a mistaken order than be taught to see that it is mistaken. A parent must be master in his own house.

4. *The fourth use is to form habits of faith.*—As Judaism was a system calculated to nurture habits of obedience, so was it one which nourished the temper of faith. All education begins with faith. The child does not know the use of the alphabet, but he trusts. The boy beginning mathematics takes on trust what he sees no use in. The child has to take parental wisdom for granted. Happy the child that goes on believing that nothing is wiser, better, greater, than his father! Blessed spirit of confiding trust which is to be transferred to God.

II. **The time when restraint may be laid aside.**—1. *When self-command is obtained.* Some of us surely there are who have got beyond childish meanness: we could not be mean; restraint is no longer needed; we are beyond the schoolmaster. Some of us there are who have no inclination to intemperance; childish excess in eating and drinking exists no longer. Some of us there are who no longer love indolence. We have advanced beyond it. The law may be taken away, for we are free from law. True Christian liberty is this—self-command, to have been brought to Christ, to do right and love right, without a law of compulsion to school into doing it.

2. *When the state of justification by faith has been attained.*—There are two states of justification—by the law and by faith. Justification by the law implies a scrupulous and accurate performance of minute acts of obedience in every particular; justification by faith is acceptance with God, not because a man is perfect, but because he does all in a trusting, large, generous spirit, actuated by a desire to please God. In Christianity there are few or no definite laws—all men are left to themselves.

3. *Restraint must be laid aside when the time of faith has come, whether faith itself have come or not.*—It is so in academical education. We may have attained the full intellectual comprehension of the gospel, but religious goodness has not kept pace with it, and the man wakes to conviction that the gospel is a name and the powers of the world to come are not in him. You cannot put him to school again. Fear will not produce goodness. Forms will not give reverence. System will not confer freedom. Therefore the work of childhood and youth must be done while we are young, when the education is not too late.—*F. W. Robertson.*

Ver. 24. *The Law preparing for Christ.*

I. **The law led men to Christ by foreshadowing Him.**—This was true of the ceremonial part of it. The ceremonies meant more than the general duty of offering to God praise and sacrifice, since this might have been secured by much simpler rites. What

was the meaning of the solemn and touching observance of the Jewish day of atonement? We know that what passed in that old earthly sanctuary was from first to last a shadow of the majestic self-oblation of the true High Priest of Christendom, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Each ceremony was felt to have some meaning beyond the time then present, and so it fostered an expectant habit of mind; and as the ages passed these expectations thus created converged more and more towards a coming Messiah, and in a subordinate but real way the ceremonial law did its part in leading the nation to the school of Christ.

II. **By creating in man's conscience a sense of want which Christ alone could relieve.**—This was the work of the moral law, of every moral precept in the books of Moses, but especially of those most sacred and authoritative precepts which we know as the ten commandments. So far from furnishing man with a real righteousness, so far from making him such as he should be, correspondent to the true ideal of his nature, the law only inflicted on every conscience that was not fatally benumbed a depressing and overwhelming conviction that righteousness, at least in the way of legal obedience, was a thing impossible. And this conviction of itself prepared men for a righteousness which should be not the product of human efforts, but a gift from heaven—a righteousness to be attained by the adhesion of faith to the perfect moral Being, Jesus Christ, so that the believer's life becomes incorporate with His.

III. **By putting men under a discipline which trained them for Christ.**—What is the divine plan for training, whether men or nations? Is it not this—to begin with rule and to end with principle, to begin with law and to end with faith, to begin with Moses and to end with Christ? God began with rule. He gave the Mosaic law, and the moral parts of that law being also laws of God's own essential nature could not possibly be abrogated; but as rules of life the ten commandments were only a preparation for something beyond them. In the Christian revelation God says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." When you have done this, and He on His part has by His Spirit infused into you His divine life so that you are one with Him, you will not depend any longer mainly upon rules of conduct. Justification by faith is so far from being moral anarchy that it is the absorption of rule into the higher life of principle. In the experience of the soul faith corresponds to the empire of principle in the growth of individual character and in the development of national life, while the law answers to that elementary stage in which outward rules are not yet absorbed into principle. —*H. P. Liddon.*

The Law a Schoolmaster.

I. **The Jewish religion brought men to Christ by the light, the constraining force, of prophecy.**—First a human deliverance of some kind, then a personal Saviour, is announced. He was exactly what prophecy had foretold. He Himself appealed to prophecy as warranting His claims.

II. **By that ceremonial law which formed so important a part of it.**—The Jewish ceremonial pointed to Christ and His redemptive work from first to last. The epistle to the Hebrews was written to show this—that the ceremonial law was far from being a final and complete rule of life and worship, did but prefigure blessings that were to follow it, that it was a tutor to lead men to the school of Christ.

III. **By creating a sense of moral need that Christ alone could satisfy.**—The moral law—God's essential, indestructible moral nature in its relation to human life, thrown for practical purposes into the form of commandments—is essentially, necessarily beyond criticism; but when given to sinful man it does, but without grace, discover a want which it cannot satisfy.

It enhanced the acting sense of unpardoned sin before a holy God. It convinced man of his moral weakness, as well as of his guilt, of his inability without the strengthening grace of Christ ever to obey it.

Lessons.—1. *We see a test of all religious privileges or gifts: Do they or do they not lead souls to Christ?* 2. *Observe the religious use of all law—to teach man to know his weakness and to throw himself on a higher power for pardon and strength.* 3. *We see the exceeding preciousness of Christ's gospel—the matchless value of that faith which lives in the heart of the Church of God.—H. P. Liddon.*

The Progress of Revelation.

I. **The law was our schoolmaster as giving precepts in which principles were involved but not expressly taught.**

II. **As teaching inadequate and not perfect duties**—a part instead of the whole, which was to develop into the whole. Examples—the institution of the Temple worship; the observance of the Sabbath; the third commandment.

Lessons.—1. *Revelation is education.* 2. *Revelation is progressive.* 3. *The training of the character in God's revelation has always preceded the illumination of the intellect.—F. W. Robertson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 26—29.

The Dignity of Sonship with God—

I. **Enjoyed by all who believe in Christ.**—"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (ver. 26). Faith in Christ emancipates the soul from the trammels and inferior status of the tutorial training, and lifts it to the higher and more perfect relationship of a free son of God. The believer is no longer a pupil, subject to the surveillance and restrictions of the pedagogue; but a son, enjoying immediate and constant intercourse with the Father and all the privileges and dignities of a wider freedom. The higher relation excludes the lower; an advance has been made that leaves the old life for ever behind. The life now entered upon is a life of faith, which is a superior and totally different order of things from the suppressive domination of the law.

II. **Is to be invested with the character of Christ.**—"For as many as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ" (ver. 27). For if Christ is Son of God, and thou hast put on Him, having the Son in thyself and being made like to Him, thou wast brought into one kindred and one form of being with Him (*Chrysostom*). To be baptised into Christ is not the mere mechanical observance of the rite of baptism; the rite is the recognition and public avowal of the exercise of faith in Christ. In the Pauline vocabulary baptised is synonymous with believing. Faith invests the soul with Christ, and joyfully appropriates the estate and endowments of the filial relationship. Baptism by its very form—the normal and most expressive form of primitive baptism, the descent into and rising from the symbolic waters—pictured the soul's death with Christ, its burial and its resurrection in Him, its separation from the life of sin, and entrance upon the new career of a regenerated child of God (Rom. vi. 3-14).

III. **Implies such a complete union with Christ as to abolish all secondary distinctions.**—"For there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (ver. 28). All distinctions of nationality, social status, and sex—necessary as they may be in the worldly life—disappear in the blending of human souls in the loftier relationship of sons of God. The gospel is universal in its range and provisions, and raises all who believe in Christ to a higher level than man could ever reach under the Mosaic regimen. To add circumcision to faith would be not to rise but to sink from the state of sons to that of serfs. Christ is the central bond of unity to the whole human race;

faith in Him is the realisation by the individual of the honours and raptures of that unity.

IV. **Is to be entitled to the inheritance of joint heirship with Christ.**—"If ye be Christ's, then are ye ... heirs according to the promise" (ver. 29). In Christ the lineal descent from David becomes extinct. He died without posterity. But He lives and reigns over a vaster territory than David ever knew; and all who are of His spiritual seed, Jew or Gentile, share with Him the splendours of the inheritance provided by the Father. Here the soul reaches its supreme glory and joy. In Worcester Cathedral there is a slab with just one doleful word on it as a record of the dead buried beneath. That word is *Miserrimus.* No name, no date; nothing more of the dead than just this one word to say he who lay there was or is *most miserable.* Surely he had missed the way home to the Father's house and the Father's love, else why this sad record? But in the Catacombs at Rome there is one stone recently found inscribed with the single word *Felicissima.* No name, no date again, but a word to express that the dead Christian sister was *most happy.* Most happy; why? Because she had found the Father's house and love, and that peace which the storms of life, the persecutions of a hostile world, and the light afflictions of time could neither give nor take away.

Lessons.—1. *Faith confers higher privileges than the law.* 2. *Faith in Christ admits the soul into sonship with God.* 3. *The sons of God share in the fulness of the Christly inheritance.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 26-29. *Baptism.*

I. **The doctrine of Rome.**—Christ's merits are instrumentally applied by baptism; original sin is removed by a change of nature; a new character is imparted to the soul; a germinal principle or seed of life is miraculously given; and all this in virtue, not of any condition in the recipient, nor of any condition except that of the due performance of the rite. The objections to this doctrine are: 1. *It assures baptism to be not the testimony to a fact, but the fact itself.* Baptism proclaims the child of God; the Romanist says it creates him. 2. *It is materialism of the grossest kind.* 3. *It makes Christian life a struggle for something that is lost, instead of a progress to something that lies before.*

II. **The doctrine of modern Calvinism.**—Baptism admits all into the visible Church, but into the invisible Church only a special few. The real benefit of baptism only belongs to the elect. With respect to others, to predicate of them regeneration in the highest sense is at best an ecclesiastical fiction, said in the judgment of charity. You are not God's child until you become such consciously. On this we remark: 1. *This judgment of charity ends at the baptismal font.* 2. *This view is identical with the Roman one in this respect—that it creates the fact instead of testifying to it.* 3. *Is pernicious in its results in the matter of education.*

III. **The doctrine of the Bible.**—Man is God's child, and the sin of the man consists in perpetually living as if it were false. To be a son of God is one thing; to know that you are and call Him Father is another. Baptism authoritatively reveals and pledges to the individual that which is true of the race. 1. *This view prevents exclusiveness and spiritual pride.* 2. *Protests against the notion of our being separate units in the divine life.* 3. *Sanctifies materialism.*—*F. W. Robertson.*

Ver. 26. *The Children of God.*

I. **We are all children.**

II. **We are all children of God.**

III. **We are all children of God through faith.**

IV. **We are all children of God in Christ Jesus.**—*Dr. Beet.*

God's Children.

I. **If thou be God's child, surely He will provide all things necessary for soul and body.**—Our care must be to do the duty that belongs to us; when this is done our care is ended. They who drown themselves in worldly cares live like fatherless children.

II. **In that we are children we have liberty to come into the presence of God.**

III. **Nothing shall hurt those who are the children of God.**

IV. **Walk worthy of your profession and calling.**—Be not vassals of sin and Satan; carry yourselves as King's sons.

V. **Our care must be to resemble Christ.**

VI. **We must have a desire and love to the word of God** that we may grow by it.

VII. **We must have afflictions, if we be God's children,** for He corrects all His children.—*Perkins.*

Vers. 27, 28. *The Christly Character—*

I. **Acquired by a spiritual union with Christ.**—"Baptised into Christ."

II. **Is a complete investiture with Christ.**—"Have put on Christ."

III. **Is a union with Christ that absorbs all conventional distinctions** (ver. 28).

Ver. 27. *Profession without Hypocrisy.*—Hypocrisy is professing without practising. Men profess without feeling and doing, or are hypocrites in nothing so much as in their prayers. Let a man set his heart upon learning to pray and strive to learn, and no failures he may continue to make in his manner of praying are sufficient to cast him from God's favour. Let him but be in earnest, striving to master his thoughts and to be serious, and all the guilt of his incidental failings will be washed away in his Lord's blood. We profess to be saints, to be guided by the highest principles, and to be ruled by the Spirit of God. We have long ago promised to believe and obey. It is true we cannot do these things aright—nay, even with God's help we fall short of duty. Nevertheless we must not cease to profess. There is nothing so distressing to a true Christian as to have to prove himself such to others, both as being conscious of his own numberless failings and from his dislike of display. Christ has anticipated the difficulties of his modesty. He does not allow such a one to speak for himself; He speaks for him. Let us endeavour to enter more and more fully into the meaning of our own prayers and professions; let us humble ourselves for the very little we do and the poor advance we make; let us avoid unnecessary display of religion. Thus we shall, through God's grace, form within us the glorious mind of Christ.—*Newman.*

Teachings of Baptism.

I. **Our baptism must put us in mind that we are admitted and received into the family of God.**

II. **Our baptism in the name of the Trinity must teach us to know and acknowledge God aright.**

III. **Our baptism must be unto us a storehouse of comfort in time of need.**

IV. **Baptism is a putting on of Christ.**—Alluding to the custom of those who were baptised in the apostle's days putting off their garments when they were baptised, and putting on new garments after baptism. 1. In that we are to put on Christ we are reminded of our moral nakedness. 2. To have a special care of the trimming and garnishing of our souls. 3. Though we be clothed with Christ in baptism, we must further desire to be clothed upon—clad with immortality.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 28. *All are One in Christ.*

I. **People of all nations, all conditions, and all sexes.**

II. They who are of great birth and

high condition must be put in mind not to be high-minded, nor despise them of low degree, **for all are one in Christ.**

III. **All believers must be of one heart and mind.**

IV. **We learn not to hate any man, but do good to all.**—Men turn their swords and spears into mattocks and scythes, because they are one with Christ by the bond of one Spirit.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 29. *The Promise of Grace.*—The specific form of the whole gospel is promise, which God gives in the word and causes to be preached. The last period of the world is the reign of grace. Grace reigns in the world only as promise. Grace has nothing to do with law and requisition of law; therefore the word of that grace can be no other than a word of promise. The promise of life in Christ Jesus is the word of the new covenant. The difference between the gospel of the old covenant and that of the new rests alone on the transcendently greater glory of its promise.—*Harless.*

Heirs according to the Promise.

I. **The basest person, if he believes in Christ, is in the place of Abraham,** and succeeds him in the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven.

II. **Believers must be content in this world with any estate God may lay upon them,** for they are heirs with Abraham of heaven and earth.

III. **They that believe in Christ must moderate their worldly cares** and not live as drudges of the world, for they are heirs of God, and are entitled to all good things promised in the covenant.

IV. **Our special care must be for heaven.**—The city of God is thy portion, or child's part.—*Perkins.*

CHAPTER IV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **The heir, as long as he is a child.**—An infant, one under age. **Differeth nothing from a servant.**—A slave. He is not at his own disposal. He could not perform any act but through his legal representative.

Ver. 2. **Under tutors and governors.**—Controllers of his person and property.

Ver. 3. **Under the elements of the world.**—The rudimentary religious teaching of a non-religious character. The elementary lessons of outward things.

Ver. 4. **God sent forth His Son.**—Sent forth out of heaven from Himself. Implies the pre-existence of the Son. **Made of a woman.**—Made to be born of a woman. Indicating a special interposition of God in His birth as man. **Made under the law.**—By His Father's appointment and His own free will, subject to the law, to keep it all, ceremonial and moral, for us, as the Representative Man, and to suffer and exhaust the full penalty of our violation of it.

Ver. 5. **The adoption of sons.**—Receive as something destined or due. Herein God makes of sons of men sons of God, inasmuch as God made of the Son of God the Son of man (*Augustine*).

Ver. 6. **Abba, Father.**—Abba is the Chaldee for father. The early use of it illustrates what Paul has been saying (iii. 28) of the unity resulting from the gospel; for Abba, Father, unites Hebrew and Greek on one lip, making the petitioner at once a Jew and a Gentile.

Ver. 9. **How turn ye again** [anew]?—Making a new beginning in religion, lapsing from Christianity just in as far as they embrace legalism. **To the weak and beggarly elements.**—Weak is contrasted with power as to effects, and beggarly with affluence in respect of gifts. The disparaging expression is applied; not to the ritualistic externalism of heathen religions, but rather to that God-given system of ritualistic ordinances which had served the Church in her infancy. That which was appropriate food for a babe or sick man is feeble and poor for a grown man in full health.

Ver. 12. **Be as I am, for I am as ye are.**—Paul had become as a Gentile, though he was once a passionate Jew. Their natural leanings towards Judaism they ought to sacrifice as well as he.

Ver. 13. **Ye know how through infirmity of flesh I preached.**—The weakness may have been general debility, resulting from great anxieties and toils. It has been supposed that Paul was feeble-eyed, or blear-eyed (Acts xxii. 6), and that this special weakness had been aggravated at the time now in question.

Ver. 17. **They zealously affect you, but not well.**—They keenly court you, but not honourably. **They would exclude you**—from everything and every one whose influence would tend to bring the Galatians back to loyalty to the gospel.

Ver. 20. **I desire to be present with you, and to change my voice.**—To speak not with the stern tones of warning, but with tender entreaties. **I stand in doubt of you.**—I am sorely perplexed, nonplussed, bewildered, as if not knowing how to proceed.

Ver. 24. **Which things are an allegory.**—Under the things spoken of—the two sons, with their contrast of parentage and position—there lies a spiritual meaning.

Ver. 25. **Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.**—Judaism as rejecting the light and liberty of the new dispensation.

Ver. 26. **But Jerusalem which is above is free.**—Is the spiritual reality which, veiled under the old dispensation, is comparatively unveiled in the dispensation of grace, and destined to be fully and finally manifested in the reign of glory. Christians are very different in standing to slave-born slaves.

Ver. 27. **The desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.**—The special purpose of the quotation appears to be to show that the idea of a countless Church, including Gentiles as well as Jews, springing out of spiritual nothingness, was apprehended under the Old Testament as destined for realisation under the New.

Ver. 30. **Cast out the bondwoman and her son.**—Even house-room to Judaism is not matter of right, but only by sufferance, and that so long and so far as it leaves the gospel undisturbed in full possession.

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

The Nonage of the Pre-Christian World.

I. **Mankind in pre-Christian times was like the heir in his minority.**—1. *In a state of temporary servitude, though having great expectations.* "The heir differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors" (vers. 1, 2). Under the Old Testament the bond-servant had this in common with a son, that he was a recognised member of the family; and the son had this in common with the slave, that he was in servitude, but with this difference, the servitude of the son was evanescent, that of the slave was permanent. The heirship is by right of birth, but possession and enjoyment can be reached only by passing through servitude and attaining majority. The minor is in the hands of guardians who care for his person and mental training, and of stewards who manage his estate. So the world, though possessing the promise of great blessing, was held for ages in the servitude of the law.

2. *Subject to the restraint of external ordinances.*—"Were in bondage under the elements of the world" (ver. 3). The commandments and ordinances imposed by the law belonged to an early and elementary period. In their infantile externalism they stand contrasted with the analogous things of the new dispensation, in which the believer is a grown man who casts away childish things. The Mosaic system watched over and guarded the infancy of the world. It exacted a rigid obedience to its mandates, and in doing so trained mankind to see and feel the need and appreciate the rich inheritance of the covenant of grace. Mosaism rendered invaluable service to Christianity. It safe-guarded the writings that contained promises of future blessings, and educated the race throughout the period of its nonage.

II. **The matured sonship of mankind is accomplished through redemption.**—1. *The Redeemer is divinely provided and of the highest dignity.* "God sent forth His Son" (ver. 4). The mystical Germans speak of Christ as the ideal Son of man, the foretype of humanity; and there is a sense in which mankind was

created in Christ Jesus, who is "the image of God, the firstborn of every creature." But the apostle refers here to a loftier dignity belonging to Christ. He came in the character of God's Son, bringing His sonship with Him. The Word, who became flesh, was with God, was God, in the beginning. The divine Son of God was sent forth into the world by the all-loving Father to be the Redeemer of mankind and to put an end to the world's servitude.

2. *The Redeemer assumes the nature and condition of those He redeems.*—"Made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law" (vers. 4, 5). Christ was born of woman as other men are, and, like them, was at first a weak and dependent babe. His child-life has for ever beautified and consecrated child-nature. He was born under law—not the law as a mere Jew, which would have limited His redeeming work to the Jewish nation, but under law in its widest application. He submitted not only to the general moral demands of the divine law for men, but to all the duties and proprieties incident to His position as a man, even to those ritual ordinances which His coming was to abolish. The purpose of His being sent was "to redeem them that were under the law"—to buy them out of their bondage. He voluntarily entered into the condition of the enslaved that He might emancipate them.

3. *The sonship acquired through redemption is not by merit or legal right, but by adoption.*—"That we might receive the adoption of sons" (ver. 5). The sonship is by grace, not of nature. Man lost his sonship by sin; by grace he gets it back again. Adoption we do not get back; we simply receive it. It is an act of God's free grace.

III. **The attainment of sonship is a conscious reality.**—1. *Made evident by the Spirit of God witnessing in us and crying to Him as to a Father.* "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (ver. 6). God sent forth His Son into the world of men: He sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their individual hearts. The filial consciousness was born within them, supernaturally inspired. When they believed in Christ, when they saw in Him the Son of God, their Redeemer, they were stirred with a new ecstatic impulse; a divine glow of love and joy kindled in their breasts; a voice not their own spoke to their spirit; their soul leaped forth upon their lips, crying to God, "Father, Father!" They were children of God, and knew it.

2. *Confirmed by the heirship that results from the divine adoption.*—"If a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (ver. 7). The nonage, the period of servitude and subjection, is passed. It gives place to the unrivalled privilege of a maturer spiritual manhood, and the heirship to an inheritance of indescribable and imperishable blessedness.

Lessons.—1. *The law held the world in bondage.* 2. *The gospel is a message of liberty by redemption.* 3. *Redemption by Christ confers distinguished privileges.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 4, 5. *Christ's Mission for the Adoption of Sons in the Fulness of Time.*

I. **The mission of Jesus Christ and the manner in which He manifested Himself.**—"God sent forth His Son." These words present the great fact of Christ's mission from the Father and His appearance in the world. To denote the inexpressible dignity of Jesus, as being one with the Father in His most essential prerogatives and perfections, He is here styled, "His Son." He was "made of a woman." The circumstances of His incarnation placed Him at an immeasurable distance from all other parts of the human race. He was the immediate production of God, by His divine power He was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and thereby completely exempted from the

taint of original sin. He was the holy thing born of a virgin. He was by constitution placed in the same state as our first parents. He underwent a similar but severer trial, and maintained His innocence against all the assaults of Satan. He was "*made* under the law"; whereas all other creatures are under it by the very terms of their existence, by the condition of their nature. He was made under the *ceremonial* law, under the *moral* law, under the *mediatorial* law.

II. **The design of Christ's mission.**—"To redeem." He came not merely to exemplify a rule of life, but to satisfy its violation; not to explain the statutes of heaven, but to pay the penalty arising from the curse announced against their transgression. He came essentially to change the moral situation of mankind. Christ has added to our original brightness; He has not only redeemed us from the first transgression, but accumulated blessings which man, even in innocence, could never have obtained.

III. **The fitness of the season at which Christ was manifested.**—"The fulness of time." 1. It was the period foretold by the prophets. Hence the general expectation of His coming. 2. It was a period of advancement in politics, legislation, science and arts, and manners; an age of scepticism. 3. It was a period of toleration. The epoch will arrive when this world shall be thought of as nothing but as it furnished a stage for the manifestation of the Son of God.—*Robert Hall.*

Ver. 4. *The Fulness of the Time.*—Christ comes when a course of preparation, conducted through previous ages, was at last complete. He was not the creation of His own or any preceding age. What is true of all other great men, who are no more than great men, is not true of Him. They receive from their age as much as they give it; they embody and reflect its spirit. Christ really owed nothing to the time or the country which welcomed His advent.

I. **The world was prepared politically for Christ's work.**—There was a common language—the Greek; a common government—the Roman.

II. **There was a preparation in the convictions of mankind.**—The epoch of religious experiments had been closed in an epoch of despair.

III. **There was a preparation in the moral experience of mankind.**—The dreadful picture of the pagan world which St. Paul draws at the close of the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans is not a darker picture than that of pagan writers—of moralists like Seneca, of satirists like Juvenal, of historians like Tacitus; and yet enough survived of moral truth in the human conscience to condemn average pagan practice. It led them to yearn for a deliverer, although their aspirations were indefinite enough. This widespread corruption, this longing for better things, marked the close of the epoch of moral experiments.

Lessons.—1. *The earthly life of Christ stood in a totally different relation towards moral truth from that of every other man.* 2. *It was a life at harmony with itself and a revelation of higher truth.* 3. *His incarnation delivers us from false views of the world and of life, from base and desponding views of our human nature, and from bondage.*—*H. P. Liddon.*

Christ Obedient to the Law.

I. **This obedience was not a matter of course,** following upon His incarnation. He might have lived and died, had it been consistent with His high purpose, in sinless purity, without expressly undertaking as He did openly to fulfil the law. It was a voluntary act, becoming and fit for the great work He had in hand.

II. **This obedience was not only an integral but also a necessary part of His work of redemption.**—Had this not been so, redemption would have been incomplete. Not only God's unwritten law in the conscience, but God's written law in the tables of stone, must be completely satisfied. It

being shown, by both Gentile and Jew, that neither by nature nor by revealed light was man capable of pleasing God, all men were left simply and solely dependent on His free and unmerited grace. All cases of guilt must be covered, all situations of disobedience taken up and borne and carried triumphantly out into perfection and accordance with the Father's will, by the Son of God in our flesh.

III. **This obedience for man was to be not only complete,** so that Christ should stand in the root of our nature as the accepted man, **but was to be our pattern,** that as He was holy so we might be holy also.

IV. **This obedience arose from the requirements of His office connected with the law.**—He was the end of the law. It all pointed to Him. Its types and ceremonies all found fulfilment in His person and work. All has been fulfilled. All looked forward to One that was to come—to one who has come, and in His own person has superseded that law by exhausting its requirements, has glorified that law by filling out and animating with spiritual life its waste and barren places. So that God has not changed, nor has His purpose wavered, nor are His people resting on other than their old foundation.—*Dean Alford.*

Ver. 5. *Under the Law—*

I. **As the rule of life.**—Thus angels are under the law, Adam was before his fall, and the saints in heaven are so now. None yield more subjection to the law than they, and this subjection is their liberty.

II. **As a grievous yoke which none can bear.**—1. It bound the Church of the Old Testament to the observance of many and costly ceremonies. 2. It binds every offender to everlasting death. 3. It is a yoke as it increases sin and is the strength of it. The wicked nature of man is the more to do a thing the more he is forbidden.—*Perkins.*

Adoption.

I. **In what adoption consists.**—1. The points of resemblance between natural and spiritual adoption. (1) We cease to have our former name, and are designated after the name of God. (2) We change our abode. Once in the world, now in the Church and family of God. (3) We change our costume. Conform to the family dress: garments of salvation. 2. The points of difference between natural and spiritual adoption. (1) Natural adoption was to supply a family defect. God had hosts of children. (2) Natural adoption was only of sons. No distinction in God's adoption. (3) In natural adoption there was only a change of condition. God makes His children partakers of His own nature. (4) In natural adoption only one was adopted, but God adopts multitudes. (5) In natural adoption only temporal advantages were derived, but in spiritual the blessings are eternal.

II. **Signs of adoption.**—1. Internal signs. Described in iv. 6; Rom. viii. 14-16. 2. External signs. (1) Language; (2) Profession; (3) Obedience.

III. **Privileges of adoption.**—1. Deliverance from the miseries of our natural state. 2. Investiture into all the benefits of Christ's family. 3. A title to the celestial inheritance.

Learn—1. *The importance of the blessing.* 2. *Seek the good of God's family.* 3. *Invite strangers to become sons and heirs of God.*—*Sketches.*

Adoption and its Claims.—Among the American Indians when a captive was saved to be adopted in the place of some chieftain who had fallen, his allegiance and his identity were looked upon as changed. If he left a wife and children behind him, they were to be forgotten and blotted from memory. He stood in the place of the dead warrior, assumed his responsibilities, was supposed to cherish those whom he had cherished and hate those whom he had hated; in fact, he was supposed to stand in the same relation of consanguinity to the tribe.—*Bancroft.*

Vers. 6, 7. *Evidences of Sonship.*

I. **The presence of the Spirit in the**

heart.—1. The beginning of our new birth is in the heart, when a new light is put into the mind, a new and heavenly disposition into the will and affection. 2. The principal part of our renovation is in the heart where the Spirit abides. 3. The beginning and principal part of God's worship is in the heart. 4. Keep watch and ward about thy heart, that it may be a fit place of entertainment for the Spirit, who is an Ambassador sent from God to thee.

II. **The work of the Spirit.**—1. Bestowing conviction that the Scriptures are the word of God. 2. Submission to God and a desire to obey Him. 3. The testimony of the Spirit—a divine manner of reasoning framed in the mind—that we are God's children. 4. Peace of conscience, joy, and affiance in God.

III. **The desires of the heart directed towards God.**—1. Our cries are to be directed to God with reverence. 2. With submission to His will. 3. With importunity and constancy. —*Perkins.*

The Character and Privileges of the Children of God.

I. **The distinguishing characteristic of the children of God.**—1. *It is a spirit of filial confidence as opposed to servile fear.* No unpardoned sinner has a sufficient ground of confidence in God. Till assured that God loves him, he knows not how God may treat him at any particular time. But we cannot believe that God loves us and at the same time doubt His mercy. He that heartily reposes on God's favour cannot dread His vengeance.

2. *This filial spirit is one of holy love as opposed to the bondage of sin.*—The love of God is a powerful element well calculated to change the whole of our inner man. It gives a new bias to our wayward affections and a healthful vigour to every good desire.

3. *The filial spirit is one of ready obedience as opposed to the gloomy spirit of servitude.*—The service of a slave is unwilling, extorted, unsatisfactory; the obedience of a child is ready, loving, energetic. Love is self-denying, soul-absorbing, devoted.

II. **Some of the distinguishing privileges of the children of God.**—1. *The child of God has a part in the Father's love and care.* 2. *Has a filial resemblance to the heavenly Father.* 3. *Children of God have the privileges of family communion and fellowship.* 4. *Have a share in the family provisions.* 5. *Have a title to the future inheritance.* —*Robert M. Macbrair.*

Ver. 7. *God's Offspring.*—1. This is the state of all poor heathen, whether in England or foreign countries: they are children, ignorant and unable to take care of themselves, because they do not know what they are. Paul tells them they are God's offspring, though they know it not. He does not mean that we are not God's children till we find out that we are God's children. You were God's heirs all along, although you differed nothing from slaves; for as long as you were in heathen ignorance and foolishness God had to treat you as His slaves, not as His children. They thought that God did not love them, that they must buy His favours. They thought religion meant a plan for making God love them. 2. Then appeared the love of God in Jesus Christ, who told men of their heavenly Father. He preached to them the good news of the kingdom of God, that God had not forgotten them, did not hate them, would freely forgive them all that was past; and why? Because He was their Father, and loved them so that He spared not His only begotten Son. And now God looks at us in the light of Jesus Christ. He does not wish us to remain merely His child, under tutors and governors, forced to do what is right outwardly and whether it likes or not. God wishes each of us to become His son, His grown-up and reasonable son. 3. It is a fearful thing to despise the mercies of the living God, and when you are called to be His sons

to fall back under the terrors of His law in slavish fear and a guilty conscience and remorse which cannot repent. He has told you to call Him your Father; and if you speak to Him in any other way, you insult Him and trample underfoot the riches of His grace. You are not God's slaves, but His sons, heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ. What an inheritance of glory and bliss that must be which the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is to inherit with us—an inheritance of all that is wise, loving, noble, holy, peaceful, all that can make us happy and like God Himself.—*C. Kingsley.*

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

Legalism a Relapse.

I. **Legalism is no advance on heathenism.**—"When ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods" (ver. 8). Paganism was an elaborate system of formalism. The instinct of worship led men to sacrifice to imaginary deities—gods which were no gods. Ignorant of the true God, they multiplied deities of their own. The Galatian pagans created a strange Pantheon. There were their old, weird Celtic deities before whom our British forefathers trembled. On this ancestral faith had been superimposed the frantic rites of the Phrygian mother Cebele, with her mutilated priests, and the more genial and humanistic cultus of the Greek Olympian gods. The oppressive rites of legalism were little better than the heathen ritual. Religion degenerated into a meaningless formality. Dickens describes how in Genoa he once witnessed a great festa on the hill behind the house, when the people alternately danced under tents in the open air and rushed to say a prayer or two in an adjoining church bright with red and gold and blue and silver—so many minutes of dancing and of praying in regular turns of each.

II. **Legalism, to converted heathen, is a disastrous relapse.**—"After ye have known God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements?... Ye observe days and months and times and years" (vers. 9, 10). The heathen in their blindness and ignorance might be excused, and ritualism, even to the Jews before the coming of the Messiah, might be well enough; but for Christians, who had received ampler knowledge and been illumined by the Holy Spirit, to return to the weak and beggarly elements, was irrational, monstrous! Having tasted the sweets of liberty, what folly to submit again to slavery! having reached spiritual manhood, how childish to degenerate! Legalism destroys the life of religion, and leaves only a mass of petrified forms. In his *Stones of Venice*, Ruskin says: "There is no religion in any work of Titian's; there is not even the smallest evidence of religious temper or sympathies either in himself or those for whom he painted. His larger sacred themes are merely for the exhibition of pictorial rhetoric—composition and colour. His minor works are generally made subordinate to purposes of portraiture. The Madonna in the Frari church is a mere lay figure, introduced to form a link of connection between the portraits of various members of the Pesaro family who surround her. Bellini was brought up in faith; Titian in formalism. Between the years of their births the vital religion of Venice had expired."

III. **A relapse to legalism is an occasion of alarm to the earnest Christian teacher.**—"I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain" (ver. 11). The apostle knew something of the fickleness of the Galatians and of the weakness of human nature, but was hardly prepared for such a collapse of the work which he had built up with so much anxiety and care. He saw, more clearly than they, the peril of his converts, and the prospect of their further defection filled him with alarm and grief. It meant the loss of advantages

gained, of precious blessings enjoyed, of peace, of character, of influence for good. It is a painful moment when the anxious Christian worker has to mourn over failure in any degree.

Lessons.—1. *Legalism suppresses all religious growth.* 2. *Is a constant danger to the holiest.* 3. *Shows the necessity for earnest vigilance and prayer.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 8-11. *The Dilemma of Turncoats.*

I. **Their first condition was one of ignorance.**—1. *Ignorance of God.* (1) The light of nature is imperfect, because we know by it only some few and general things of God. (2) It is weak, because it serves only to cut off excuse, and is not sufficient to direct us in the worship of God. (3) It is a great and grievous sin.

2. *Idolatry.*—(1) When that which is not God is placed and worshipped in the room of the true God. (2) When men acknowledge the true God, but do not conceive Him as He will be conceived, and as He has revealed Himself. (3) What a man loves most, cares for most, and delights in most, that is his God. Where the heart is, there is thy God.

II. **Their changed condition is the knowledge of God in Christ.**—1. This is a special knowledge whereby we must acknowledge God to be our God in Christ. 2. This knowledge must be not confused, but distinct. (1) We must acknowledge God in respect of His presence in all places. (2) In respect of His particular providence over us. (3) In respect of His will in all things to be done and suffered. 3. This knowledge must be an effectual and lively knowledge, working in us new affections, and inclinations.

III. **Their revolt is an abandonment of salvation.**—It is an exchange of knowledge for ignorance, of the substance for the shadow, of reality for emptiness—a return to weak and beggarly elements. It is the substitution of ceremonies for genuine worship.

IV. **The conduct of turn-coats is an occasion of ministerial disappointment and alarm** (ver. 11).—Work that is in vain in respect of men is not so before God.—*Perkins.*

Vers. 8, 9. *Ignorance of God a Spiritual Bondage.*—1. However nature's light may serve to make known there is a God and that He ought to be served, it is nothing else but ignorance, as it leaves us destitute of the knowledge of God in Christ, without which there is no salvation. 2. Men are naturally inclined to feign some representation of the Godhead by things which incur in the outward senses, from which they easily advance to give divine worship unto those images and representations. 3. Though the Levitical ceremonies were once to be religiously observed as a part of divine worship leading to Christ, yet when the false teachers did urge them as a part of necessary commanded worship, or as a part of their righteousness before God, the apostle is bold to give them the name of "weak and beggarly elements." 4. People may advance very far in the way of Christianity, and yet make a foul retreat afterwards in the course of defection and apostasy. —*Fergusson.*

Vers. 9, 10. *God's Sabbatic Law antedated the Mosaic Law.*—And whatever of legal bondage had been linked with the observance of the Jewish Sabbath was eliminated together with the change to the first day of the week. This at once removes the Lord's Day from the category of days, and also of weak and beggarly elements. The mode of observance is learned from the Lord's words, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," which at the same time imply, when rightly understood, the perpetual necessity for a Sabbath.—*Lange.*

Ver. 11. *Ministerial Anxiety*—1. Prompts to earnest efforts in imparting the highest spiritual truths. 2. Looks for corresponding results in consistency of character and conduct. 3. Is grieved with the least indications of religious failure.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12—20.

The Pleadings of an Anxious Teacher with his Pupils in Peril.

I. **He reminds them of the enthusiastic attachment of former days.**—1. *Urges them to exercise the same freedom as he himself claimed.* "Be as I am; for I am as ye are" (ver. 12). Though himself a Jew, Paul had assumed no airs of superiority, and did not separate himself from his Gentile brethren; he became as one of them. He asks them to exercise a similar liberty; and lest they should fear he would have a grudge against them because of their relapse, he hastens to assure them, "Ye have not injured [wronged] me at all" (ver. 12).

2. *Recalls their extravagant expression of admiration on their first reception of his teaching.*—"Ye know how through infirmity I preached at the first. My temptation ye despised not; but received me as an angel of God. . . . Ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me" (vers. 13, 14, 15). His physical weakness, which might have moved the contempt of others, elicited the sympathy of the warm-hearted Galatians. They listened with eagerness and wonder to the gospel he preached. The man, with his humiliating infirmity, was lost in the charm of his message. They were thankful that, though his sickness was the reason of his being detained among them, it was the opportunity of their hearing the gospel. Had he been an angel from heaven, or Jesus Christ Himself, they could not have welcomed him more rapturously. They would have made any sacrifice to assure him of their regard and affection.

3. *Shows he was not less their friend because he rebuked them.*—"Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (ver. 16). And now they rush, with Gallic-like fickleness, to the opposite extreme. Because he attacks the new fancies with which they have become enamoured, and probes them with some wholesome and unwelcome truths, they imagine he has become their enemy. Not so; he is but using the privilege of a true and faithful friend.

II. **He warns them against the seductive tactics of false teachers.**—1. *Their zealous flattery was full of danger.* "They zealously affect you, but not well; they would exclude you" (ver. 17). They are courting you, these present suitors for your regard, dishonourably; they want to shut us out and have you to themselves, that you may pay court to them. They pretend to be zealous for your interests; but it is their own they seek. They would exclude you from all opportunities of salvation—yea, from Christ Himself. The flatterer should be always suspected. The turning away from sound doctrine goes hand in hand with a predilection for such teachers as tickle the ear, while they teach only such things as correspond to the sinful inclinations of the hearers.

2. *Though genuine zeal is commendable.*—"It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing" (ver. 18). Christian zeal must be seen not only to correspond and to be adapted to the intellect, but must also be in harmony with the highest and profoundest sentiments of our nature. It must not be exhibited in the dry, pedantic divisions of a scholastic theology; nor must it be set forth and tricked out in the light drapery of an artificial rhetoric, in prettiness of style, in measured sentences, with an insipid floridness, and in the form of elegantly feeble essays. No; it must come from the soul in the language of earnest conviction and strong feeling.

III. **He pleads with the tender solicitude of a spiritual parent.**—"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, . . . I desire to be present with you, and

to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you" (vers. 19, 20). As a mother, fearful of losing the affection of her children for whom she has suffered so much, the apostle appeals to his converts in tones of pathetic persuasion. His heart is wrung with anguish as he sees the peril of his spiritual children, and he breaks out into tender and impassioned entreaty. And yet he is perplexed by the attitude they have taken, and as if uncertain of the result of his earnest expostulations. The preacher has to learn to be patient as well as zealous.

Lessons.—1. *Strong emotions and warm affections are no guarantee for the permanence of religious life.* 2. *How prone are those who have put themselves in the wrong to fix the blame on others.* 3. *Men of the Galatian type are the natural prey of self-seeking agitators.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 12. *Christian Brotherhood.*—Here is: 1. A loving compellation—"Brethren." 2. A submissive address by way of comprecation—"I beseech you." 3. A request most reasonable—"Be ye as I am; for I am as ye are." 4. A wise and prudent preoccupation or prevention which removes all obstructions and forestalls those jealousies, those surmises and groundless suspicions, which are the bane of charity and the greatest enemies to peace. "Ye have not injured me at all."

I. **Nature herself hath made all men brethren.**—1. *This may serve to condemn all those who look upon men under other consideration than as men,* or view them in any other shape than as brethren. And the very name of man and of brother should be an amulet for all mankind against the venom of iniquity and injustice.

2. *By this light of nature we may condemn ourselves when any bitterness towards our brother riseth in our hearts,* and allay or rather root it out as inhuman and unnatural. None can dishonour us more than ourselves do, when one man hath trodden down another as the clay in the streets, when we think ourselves great men by making our brethren little, when we contemn and despise, hate and persecute them.

II. **Brethren as Christians professing the same faith.**—There is such a brotherhood that neither error nor sin nor injury can break and dissolve it.

1. *Men may err and yet be brethren.*—We may be divided in opinion and yet united in charity. Consider the difficulty of finding out truth in all things and avoiding error, that our brother may err rather from want of light than out of malice and wilfully, and conceive it possible we may err as foully as others.

2. *Men may sin and yet be brethren.*—Charity, because she may err, nay, because she must err, looks upon every Christian as a brother. If he err, she is a guide to him; if he sin, she is a physician; if he fall, she strives to lift him up, being a light to the blind and a staff to the weak.

3. *Men may injure each other and yet be brethren.*—Socrates, being overcome in judgment, professed he had no reason to be angry with his enemies unless it were for this, that they conceived and believed they had hurt him. Indeed, no injury can be done by a brother to a brother. The injury is properly done to God, who reserves all power of revenge to Himself. "If a brother strike us," said Chrysostom, "kiss his hand; if he would destroy us, our revenge should be to save him." Nazianzen said to the young man who was suborned to kill him, "Christ forgive thee, who hath also forgiven me and died to save me."

Lessons.—1. *Brotherly love is pleasant and delightful.* 2. *Profitable and advantageous.* 3. *So necessary that it had been better for us never to have been than not to love the brethren.*—*A. Farindon.*

Vers. 13-15. *Love for the Preacher*—

I. **Notwithstanding the physical infirmity of the messenger** (ver. 13).

II. **Generates the loftiest esteem for his character and abilities** (ver. 14).

III. **Is often expressed in exaggerated terms** (ver. 15).

Ver. 14. *The Authority of the Messenger of God.*

I. **He is to be heard even as Christ Himself,** because in preaching he is the mouth of God.

II. Here we see the goodness of God, **who does not speak to us in His majesty, but appoints men in His stead,** who are His ambassadors.

III. **There must be fidelity in teachers.**—They stand in the stead of Christ, and must deliver only that which they know to be the will of Christ.

IV. **They must have especial care of holiness of life.**

V. **The people are to hear their teachers with reverence,** as if they would hear the angels or Christ Himself.

VI. **The comfort of the ministry is as sure** as if an angel came down from heaven, or Christ Himself, to comfort us.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 16. *The Right Mode of giving and receiving Reproof.*—Should it be esteemed the part of a friend faithfully to tell men the truth? and should the suppression of truth and the substitution of its opposite be held to mark the character of an enemy? How often has the amicable state of feeling been broken up by telling the truth, even when done in a proper spirit and manner!

I. **What would you wish your friend to be?**—1. Sincere. 2. That he should take a very general interest in my welfare and be desirous to promote it. 3. A person of clear, sound, discriminating judgment, and with a decided preference in all things. 4. That he should not be a man full of self-complacency, a self-idolater, but observant and severe towards his own errors and defects. 5. A man who would include me expressly in his petitions, praying that I may be delivered from those evils which he perceives in me, and God far more clearly. 6. Such that, as the last result of my communications with him, a great deal of what may be defective and wrong in me shall have been disciplined away.

II. **Why do we regard a friend as an enemy because he tells us the truth?**—1. Because plain truth, by whatever voice, must say many things that are displeasing. 2. Because there is a want of the real earnest desire to be in all things set right. 3. Because there is pride, reacting against a fellow-mortal and fellow-sinner. 4. Because there is not seldom a real difference of judgment on the matters in question. 5. Because there is an unfavourable opinion or surmise as to the motives of the teller of truth.

III. **How should reproof be administered?**—1. Those who do this should well exercise themselves to understand what they speak of. 2. It should be the instructor's aim that the authority may be conveyed in the truth itself, and not seem to be assumed by him as the speaker of it. 3. He should watch to select favourable times and occasions.

IV. **How should reproof be received?**—1. By cultivating a disposition of mind which earnestly desires the truth, in whatever manner it may come to us. 2. There have been instances in which a friend, silent when he should have spoken, has himself afterwards received the reproof for not having done so from the person whom he declined to admonish. 3. If there be those so painfully and irritably susceptible as to be unwilling to hear corrective truth from others, how strong is the obligation that they should look so much the more severely to themselves.—*John Foster.*

Ver. 18. *Zeal.*

I. **Various kinds of zeal.**—1. There

is a zeal of God which is not according to knowledge. 2. There is a mistaken zeal for the glory of God. (1) When that is opposed which is right, under a false notion of its being contrary to the glory of God. (2) When ways and methods improper are taken to defend and promote the glory of God. (3) There is a superstitious zeal, such as was in Baal's worshippers, who cut themselves with knives and lancets; particularly in the Athenians, who were wholly given to idolatry; and the Jews, who were zealous of the traditions of the fathers. (4) There is a persecuting zeal, under a pretence of the glory of God. (5) There is a hypocritical zeal for God, as in the Pharisees, who made a show of great zeal for piety, by their long prayers, when they only sought to destroy widows' houses by that means. (6) There is a contentious zeal, which often gives great trouble to Christian communities. (7) True zeal is no other than a fervent, ardent love to God and Christ, and a warm concern for their honour and glory.

II. **The objects of zeal.**—1. The object of it is God. The worship of God, who must be known, or He cannot be worshipped aright. 2. The cause of Christ is another object of zeal. The gospel of Christ; great reason there is to be zealous for that, since it is the gospel of the grace of God. 3. The ordinances of Christ, which every true Christian should be zealous for, that they be kept as they were first delivered, without any innovation or corruption. 4. The discipline of Christ's house should be the object of our zeal. 5. True zeal is concerned in all the duties of religion and shows itself in them.

III. **Motives exciting to the exercise of true zeal.**—1. The example of Christ. 2. True zeal answers a principal end of the redemption of Christ. 3. It is good, the apostle says, to be zealously affected in and for that which is good. 4. A lukewarm temper, which is the opposite to zeal, seems not consistent with true religion, which has always life and heat in it. 5. The zeal of persons shown in a false way should stimulate the professors of the true religion to show at least an equal zeal.—*Pulpit Assistant.*

Christian Zeal—

I. **Implies unwavering steadfastness of purpose.**

II. **Universal and hearty obedience to God's commands** in all things, small as well as great.

III. **Supreme devotion of heart and life to Christ.**

IV. **Should be exercised in a good thing.**—True zeal seeks benevolent ends by lawful means, else it is fanaticism. It seeks practical ends by wise means, else it is enthusiasm. Zeal should be shown in active and useful devotion to the cause of religion, rather than in excitement and warm devotional exercise.

V. **Should be uniform, not periodical.**—It should not depend upon the fluctuations of feeling, but should act upon principle. Periodical fervours are deceitful, dangerous, injurious, dishonourable to religion. They are commonly a proof of superficial piety, or of none at all.—*Stephen Olin.*

Godly Zeal and its Counterfeits.

I. **Let us distinguish between mere natural zeal and spiritual ardour.**—1. There is a zeal of *sympathy* which is awakened by the zeal of others with whom we associate. It is only that of the soldier who, though himself a coward, is urged on to battle by the example of those around him. 2. There is *constitutional* zeal, a warmth, an ardour, which enters into all we say or do, which pervades all our actions and animates all our services. This is not strictly religious but animal excitement, and is no more allied to our soul-life than our arms or our feet. 3. There is a zeal which is merely *sentimental.* It throws a romantic glamour over our objects; but its exercises are too occasional, too random, to produce much effect. 4. There is a zeal of *affectation* like that of Jehu (2 Kings x. 16). This

is religious foppery and hypocritical vanity. 5. *Christian* zeal is a fair demonstration of what is felt within. It seeks not the eye of man, but acts under the conviction of God's omniscience.

II. **Consider the objects to which Christian zeal should be directed.**—This "good thing" may be taken as including all true religion, and embracing: 1. The promotion of God's glory. 2. The extension of Christ's kingdom. 3. The salvation of men. 4. The conversion of the world.

III. **The good that results from the exercise of Christian zeal to the persons that possess it.**—1. It renders them more Christ-like. 2. It furthers the divine designs in the most effective way. 3. We become worthy followers of the great heroes of faith in the past ages.—*The Preacher's Magazine.*

True Christian Zeal.

I. **The Christian convert is zealously affected in a good thing.**—1. *All the teachings of Christianity are good.* They enlighten, guide, and sanctify. They are peculiar, harmonious, infallible, divine. Their morality is sublime, their spirit heavenly, their effect glorious.

2. *The influence of Christianity is good.*—It has created the sweet charities of national and domestic life, sanctified advancing civilisation, softened the fierceness of war, stimulated science, prompted justice and liberty. Sceptics have admitted this.

3. *All that Christianity accomplishes for man is good.*—It saves him from sin, from the stings of guilt, from the eternal consequences of wrong-doing.

II. **The zeal of the Christian convert is to be steady and continuous.**—There should be no diminution nor fluctuation in our zeal. 1. *Because no reason can be assigned why we should not be as zealous at any after-hour as at the hour of our conversion.* 2. *Because it is only by steady and continuous zeal that a proper measure of Christian influence can be exerted.* 3. *Because only by steady and continuous zeal can Christian character be matured.* 4. *Because only thus can success in Christian enterprises be attained.* 5. *Because steady and continuous zeal will alone bring divine approval.*

III. **The zeal of the Christian convert is not to be unduly influenced by the presence of others.**—While Paul was with the Churches in Galatia they were zealous, but after his departure their zeal ceased. To lose our zeal because we have lost the influence of another is to show: 1. *That we never possessed true Christian motives.* 2. *That our supposed attachment to Christ and His cause was delusive.* 3. *That our zeal had merely been an effort to please men, not God.*—*The Lay Preacher.*

Ver. 19. *The Christmas of the Soul.*—The apostle refers to the spiritual birth. The soul then rises into a consciousness of its infinite importance; its thoughts, sympathies, and purposes become Christ-like, and Christ is manifested in the life. The soul-birth were impossible if Christ had not been born in Bethlehem. That was an era in the world's history, this in the individual life; that was brought about by the Holy Spirit, this is effected by the same divine Agent; that was followed by the antagonism of the world, this is succeeded by the opposition of evil, both within and without; that was the manifestation of God in the flesh, this is the renewing of man's nature in the image of God; that came to pass without man's choice, this requires man's seeking. Has this spiritual birth taken place in you? If so, you have a right to the enjoyment of a happy Christmas. Keep the feast as a new man in Christ Jesus.—*Homiletic Monthly.*

Ver. 20. *A Preacher's Perplexity*—

I. **Occasioned by the defection of his converts.**—"I stand in doubt of you."

II. **As to what method he should adopt to restore them.**—"And to change my voice."

III. **Increased by the difficulty of**

effecting a personal interview.—"I desire to be present with you now."

"*I stand in doubt of you.*" *Doubtful Christians.*

I. **Persons whose religion is liable to suspicion.**—1. Those who have long attended the means of grace, and are very defective in knowledge. 2. Who possess much knowledge, and are puffed up with it. 3. Who contend for doctrinal religion rather than for that which is practical and experimental. 4. Who waver in their attachment to the fundamental principles of the gospel. 5. Who neglect the ordinances of God's house. 6. Who neglect devotional exercises. 7. Who co-operate not with the Church to advance the kingdom of Christ in the world.

II. **The improvement to be made of the subject.**—1. Should lead to self-examination. 2. Shows the loss and danger of persons so characterised. 3. Should lead to repentance and faith. 4. While exercising a godly jealousy over others, let Christians watch with greater jealousy over themselves.—*Helps.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 21—31.

The History of Hagar and Sarah allegorical of the Law and the Gospel.

I. **The two women represented two different covenants.**—1. *Hagar represented Sinai, typical of the law with its slavish exactions and terrible threatenings* (vers. 22, 25). Sinai spoke of bondage and terror. It was a true symbol of the working of the law of Moses, exhibited in the present condition of Judaism. And round the base of Sinai Hagar's wild sons had found their dwelling. Jerusalem was no longer the mother of freemen. Her sons chafed under the Roman yoke. They were loaded with self-inflicted burdens. The spirit of the nation was that of rebellious, discontented slaves. They were Ishmaelite sons of Abraham, with none of the nobleness, the reverence, the calm and elevated faith of their father. In the Judaism of the apostle's day the Sinaitic dispensation, uncontrolled by the higher patriarchal and prophetic faith, had worked out its natural result. It gendered to bondage. A system of repression and routine, it had produced men punctual in tithes of mint and anise, but without justice, mercy, or faith; vaunting their liberty while they were servants of corruption. The Pharisee was the typical product of law apart from grace. Under the garb of a freeman he carried the soul of a slave.

2. *Sarah represented Jerusalem, typical of the gospel with its higher freedom and larger spiritual fruitfulness* (vers. 26-28).—Paul has escaped from the prison of legalism, from the confines of Sinai; he has left behind the perishing earthly Jerusalem, and with it the bitterness and gloom of his Pharisaic days. He is a citizen of the heavenly Zion, breathing the air of a divine freedom. The yoke is broken from the neck of the Church of God; the desolation is gone from her heart. Robbed of all outward means, mocked and thrust out as she is by Israel after the flesh, her rejection is a release, an emancipation. Conscious of the spirit of sonship and freedom, looking out on the boundless conquests lying before her in the Gentile world, the Church of the new covenant glories in her tribulations. In Paul is fulfilled the joy of prophet and psalmist, who sang in former days of gloom concerning Israel's enlargement and world-wide victories (*Findlay*).

II. **The antagonism of their descendants represented the violent and incessant opposition of the law to the gospel.**—"As he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. . . . Cast out the bondwoman and her son" (vers. 29, 30). Sooner or later the slave-boy was bound to go. He has no proper birthright, no permanent footing in the house. One day he exceeds his licence, he makes himself intolerable; he must be gone.

The Israelitish people showed more than Ishmael's jealousy toward the infant Church of the Spirit. No weapon of violence or calumny was too base to be used against it. Year by year they became more hardened against spiritual truth, more malignant towards Christianity, and more furious and fanatical in their hatred towards their civil rulers. Ishmael was in the way of Isaac's safety and prosperity (*Ibid.*).

III. **The gospel bestows a richer inheritance than the law.**—"The son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. . . . We are children of the free" (vers. 30, 31). The two systems were irreconcilable. The law and the gospel cannot coexist and inherit together; the law must disappear before the gospel. The higher absorbs the lower. The Church of the future, the spiritual seed of Abraham gathered out of all nations, has no part in legalism. It embraces blessings of which Mosaism had no conception—"an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

Lessons.—1. *The law and the gospel differ fundamentally* 2. *The law imposes intolerable burdens.* 3. *The gospel abrogates the law by providing a higher spiritual obedience.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 21-31. *Legal Bondage and Spiritual Freedom contrasted—*

I. **In their inception and development** (vers. 21-27).

II. **In their ceaseless antagonism** (ver. 29).

III. **In their inevitable results** (vers. 28, 30, 31).

Ver. 21. *A Lesson from the Law—*

I. **Addressed to those eager for its subjection.**—"Ye that desire to be under the law."

II. **Is suggestive of solemn warning.**

III. **Should be seriously pondered.**—"Tell me, do ye not hear the law?"

Ver. 26. *Jerusalem Above.*

I. **The Church of Christ as she exists in the present world.**—"Jerusalem, above and free."

1. *Above; that is, seen in connection with God and the scenes of the heavenly world.*—(1) Her Head is from above. (2) If we take the Church as a whole, though she is in part on earth, the greater number of her members are in heaven. (3) Our Jerusalem is above because her members all fix their affections there and thither tend as the great end of their profession.

2. *Jerusalem above is free, and so are her children.*—From the bondage of seeking salvation by works of law, from the guilt of sin, from its dominion.

II. **The filial sentiment with which we ought to regard the Church of Christ.**—She is "the mother of us all." The general idea is, that if we are indeed spiritual, under God, we owe all to the Church. To her God has committed the preservation of His truth. In stormy times she has sheltered her lamps in the recesses of the sanctuary, and in happier times has placed them on high to guide and save. The Spirit of God is in the Church. To her you owe your hallowed fellowships. In the Church it is that God manifests Himself.

III. **The animating anticipations we are thus taught to form of the Church as glorified.**—Turn to the description given in Revelation xxi. 1. *Mark the wall great and high*—denoting the perfect, impregnable security of those who dwell there. 2. *At the gates are angels*—still ushering in the heirs of salvation, and disdaining not to be porters to this glorious city. 3. *Mark the foundations*, garnished with all manner of precious stones—implying permanency. 4. *Mark the circumstance that in the twelve foundations are inscribed the names of the twelve apostles*—the whole being the result of their doctrine.

5. *The whole city is a temple all filled with the presence and glory of God.* No holiest of all is there where every part is most holy. All are filled, sanctified, beatified, by the fully manifested presence of God. He is all in all; all things in and to all.—*Richard Watson.*

Jerusalem a Type of the Universal Church.

I. **God chose Jerusalem above all other places to dwell in.** The Church catholic is the company chosen to be the particular people of God.

II. **Jerusalem is a city compact in itself by reason of the bond of love and order among the citizens.** In like sort the members of the Church catholic are linked together by the bond of one Spirit.

III. **In Jerusalem was the sanctuary, a place of God's presence,** where the promise of the seed of the woman was preserved till the coming of the Messias. Now the Church catholic is in the room of the sanctuary, in it we must seek the presence of God and the word of life.

IV. **In Jerusalem was the throne of David.** In the Church catholic is the throne or sceptre of Christ.

V. **The commendation of a city, as Jerusalem, is the subjection and obedience of the citizens.** In the Church catholic all believers are citizens, and they yield voluntary obedience and subjection to Christ their King.

VI. **As in Jerusalem the names of the citizens were enrolled in a register,** so the names of all the members of the Church catholic are enrolled in the Book of Life.

VII. **The Church catholic is said to be above**: 1. In respect of her beginning. 2. Because she dwells by faith in heaven with Christ.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 28. *Believers Children of Promise.*

I. **The character.**—1. Believers are the children of promise by regeneration. 2. By spiritual nourishment. 3. In respect of education. 4. With respect to assimilation, likeness, and conformity.

II. **State the comparison.**—1. Isaac was the child of Abraham, not by natural power. Believers are children of Abraham by virtue of promise. 2. Isaac was the fruit of prayer, as well as the child of promise. 3. Isaac's birth was the joy of his parents. Even so with reference to believers. 4. Isaac was born not after the flesh, but by the promise; not of the bondwoman, but of the free. So believers are not under the law. 5. Isaac was no sooner born but he was mocked by Ishmael; so it is now. 6. Isaac was the heir by promise, though thus persecuted. Even so believers.

III. **How the promise hath such virtue for begetting children to God.**—1. As it is the discovery of divine love. 2. The object of faith. 3. The ground of hope. 4. The seed of regeneration. 5. The communication of grace. 6. The chariot of the Spirit.

Inferences.—1. *If believers are children of promise, then boasting is excluded.* 2. *Then salvation is free.* 3. *The happiness and dignity of believers—they are the children of God.* —*Pulpit Assistant.*

Ver. 29. *On Persecution.*

I. **That no privilege of the Church can exempt her from persecution.**—1. *From the consideration of the quality of the persons here upon the stage, the one persecuting, the other suffering.* (1) The persecuting—"born after the flesh." Like Hannibal, they can part with anything but war and contention; they can be without their native country, but not without an enemy. These whet the sword, these make the furnace of persecution seven times hotter than it would be. The flesh is the treasury whence these winds blow that rage and beat down all before them. (2) The suffering—"born after the Spirit." Having no security, no policy, no eloquence, no strength, but that which lieth in his innocency and truth, which he carrieth about as a cure, but it is looked upon as a persecution by those who will not be healed. "For he must appear," said Seneca, "as a fool that

he may be wise, as weak that he may be strong, as base and vile that he may be more honourable." If thou be an Isaac, thou shalt find an Ishmael.

2. *From the nature and constitution of the Church which in this world is ever militant.*—Persecution is the honour, the prosperity, the flourishing condition, of the Church. When her branches were lopped off she spread the more, when her members were dispersed there were more gathered to her, when they were driven about the world they carried that sweet-smelling savour about them which drew in multitudes to follow them.

3. *From the providence and wisdom of God who put this enmity between these two seeds.*—God's method is best. That is method and order with Him which we take to be confusion, and that which we call persecution is His art, His way of making saints. In Abraham's family Ishmael mocketh and persecuteth Isaac, in the world the synagogue persecuteth the Church, and in the Church one Christian persecuteth another. It was so, it is so, and it will be so to the end of the world.

II. **The lessons of persecution.**—1. *The persecution of the Church should not create surprise.* 2. *Not to regard the Church and the world as alike.* 3. *Build ourselves up in faith so as to be prepared for the fiery trial.* 4. *Love the truth you profess.* 5. *Be renewed in spirit.*—*A. Farindon.*

Ver. 30. *Cast out the Bondwoman and her Son.*—To cast out is an act of violence, and the true Church evermore hath the suffering part. How shall the Church cast out those of her own house and family? 1. By the vehemency of our prayers that God would either melt their hearts or shorten their hands, either bring them into the right way, or strike off their chariot wheels. 2. By our patience and longsuffering. 3. By our innocency of life and sincerity of conversation. 4. By casting our burden upon the Lord.—*Ibid.*

The Fate of Unbelievers.

I. **All hypocrites, mockers of the grace of God, shall be cast forth of God's family,** though for a time they bear a sway therein. This is the sentence of God. Let us therefore repent of our mocking, and become lovers of the grace of God.

II. **The persecution of the people of God shall not be perpetual,** for the persecuting bondwoman and her son must be cast out.

III. **All justiciary people and persons that look to be saved and justified before God by the law,** either in whole or in part, are cast out of the Church of God, and have no part in the kingdom of heaven. The casting out of Hagar and Ishmael is a figure of the rejection of all such.—*Perkins.*

CHAPTER V.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Stand fast in.**—Stand up to, make your stand for. **The liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.**—As Christ has given you this liberty you are bound to stand fast in it. **Be not entangled.**—Implicated in a way which involves violence to true spontaneous life. **The yoke of bondage.**—Contrasted with the yoke of Christ, which is compatible with the fullest spiritual freedom.

Ver. 2. **If ye be circumcised.**—Not simply as a national rite, but as a symbol of Judaism and legalism in general; as necessary to justification. **Christ shall profit you nothing.**—The gospel of grace is at an end. He who is circumcised is so fearing the law, and he who fears disbelieves the power of grace, and he who disbelieves can profit nothing by that grace which he disbelieves (*Chrysostom*).

Ver. 5. **Wait for the hope of righteousness.**—Righteousness, in the sense of justification, is already attained, but the consummation of it in future perfection is the object of hope to be waited for.

Ver. 6. **Faith which worketh by love.**—Effectually worketh, exhibits its energy by love, and love is the fulfilling of the law.

Ver. 9. **A little leaven.**—Of false doctrine, a small amount of evil influence.

Ver. 10. **He that troubleth you.**—The leaven traced to personal agency; whoever plays the troubler. **Shall bear his judgment.**—Due and inevitable condemnation from God.

Ver. 11. **Then is the offence of the cross ceased.**—The offence, the stumbling-block, to the Jew which roused his anger was not the shame of Messiah crucified, but the proclamation of free salvation to all, exclusive of the righteousness of human works.

Ver. 12. **I would they were cut off which trouble you.**—Self-mutilated, an imprecation more strongly expressed in chap. i. 8, 9. Christian teachers used language in addressing Christians in the then heathen world that would be regarded as intolerable in modern Christendom, purified and exalted by Christ through their teachings.

Ver. 13. **Use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.**—Do not give the flesh the handle or pretext for its indulgence, which it eagerly seeks for. **By love serve one another.**—If ye must be in bondage, be servants to one another in love.

Ver. 15. **If ye bite and devour one another, . . . consumed.**—Figures taken from the rage of beasts of prey. The *biting* of controversy naturally runs into the devouring of controversial mood waxing fierce with indulgence. And the controversialists, each snapping at and gnawing his antagonist, forget the tendency is to *consume* the Christian cause. Strength of soul, health of body, character, and resources are all consumed by broils.

Ver. 18. **If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.**—Under no irksome restraint. To him who loves, law is not irksome bondage but delightful direction. Active spiritual life is a safeguard against lawless affection.

Ver. 19. **The works of the flesh.**—1. *Sensual vices*—"adultery [omitted in the oldest MSS.], fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness." 2. *Theological vices*—"idolatry, witchcraft." 3. *Malevolent vices*—"hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders." 4. *Vices of excess*—"drunkenness, revellings."

Ver. 22. **The fruit of the Spirit.**—The singular *fruit*, as compared with the plural *works*, suggests that the effect of the Spirit's inworking is one harmonious whole, while carnality tends to multitudinousness, distraction, chaos. We are not to look for a rigorous logical classification in either catalogue. Generally, the fruit of the Spirit may be arranged as: I. *Inward graces*—"love, joy, peace." II. *Graces towards man*—"longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." III. *A more generic form of inward graces*—"meekness, temperance."

Ver. 23. **Against such there is no law.**—So far from being against love, law commands it.

Ver. 24. **Have crucified the flesh.**—Not human nature, but depraved human nature. **With the affections and lusts.**—Affections refer to the general frame of mind; the lusts to special proclivities or habits.

Ver. 26. **Not be desirous of vainglory, provoking** [challenging], **envying one another.**—Vain-gloriousness provokes contention; contention produces envy.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 1.

Christian Liberty—

I. **Should be valued considering how it was obtained.**—"The liberty where. with Christ hath made us free." It is a liberty purchased at a great cost. Christ, the Son of God, became incarnated, suffered in a degree unparalleled and incomprehensible, and died the shameful and ignoble death of the crucified to win back the liberty man had forfeited by voluntary sin. The redemption of man was hopeless from himself, and but for the intervention of a competent Redeemer he was involved in utter and irretrievable bondage. Civil liberty, though the inalienable right of every man, has been secured as the result of great struggle and suffering. "With a great sum," said the Roman captain to Paul, "obtained I this freedom;" and many since his day have had to pay dearly for the common rights of citizenship. But Christian liberty should be valued as the choicest privilege, remembering it was purchased by the suffering Christ, and that it has been defended through the ages by a noble army of martyrs.

II. **Should remind us of the oppression from which it delivers.**—"And be

not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." The Galatians had been bondmen, enslaved by the worship of false and vile deities. If they rush into the snare of the legalists, they will be bondmen again, and their bondage will be the more oppressive now they have tasted the joys of freedom. Disobedience involves us in many entanglements. It is among the most potent of the energies of sin that it leads astray by blinding and blinds by leading astray; that the soul, like the strong champion of Israel, must have its eyes put out, when it would be bound with fetters of brass and condemned to grind in the prison-house (Judg. xvi. 21). Redemption from the slavery of sin should fill the heart with gratitude. A wealthy and kind Englishman once bought a poor negro for twenty pieces of gold. He presented him with a sum of money that he might buy a piece of land and furnish himself a home. "Am I really free? May I go whither I will?" cried the negro in the joy of his heart. "Well, let me be your slave, massa; you have redeemed me, and I owe all to you." The gentleman took him into his service, and he never had a more faithful servant. How much more eagerly should we do homage and service to the divine Master, who Himself has made us free!

III. **Should be rigorously maintained.**—"Stand fast therefore." The price of freedom is incessant vigilance; once gained it is a prize never to be lost, and no effort or sacrifice should be grudged in its defence. "As far as I am a Christian," said Channing, "I am free. My religion lays on me not one chain. It does not hem me round with a mechanical ritual, does not enjoin forms, attitudes, and hours of prayer, does not descend to details of dress and food, does not put on me one outward badge. It teaches us to do good, but leaves us to devise for ourselves the means by which we may best serve mankind." The spirit of Christian liberty is eternal. Jerusalem and Rome may strive to imprison it. They might as well seek to bind the winds of heaven. Its seat is the throne of Christ. It lives by the breath of His Spirit. Not to be courageous and faithful in its defence is disloyalty to Christ and treachery to our fellow-men.

Lessons.—1. *Christ is the true Emancipator of men.* 2. *Christian liberty does not violate but honours the law of love.* 3. *Liberty is best preserved by being consistently exercised.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSE.

Ver. 1. *Freedom from Bondage.*—1. Every man by nature is a bond-slave, being under the bondage of sin. The Jews were under bondage to the ceremonial law, involving great trouble, pain in the flesh, and great expense. 2. Jesus Christ by His obedience and death has purchased freedom and liberty to His Church—liberty not to do evil, nor from the yoke of new obedience, nor from the cross, nor from that obedience and reverence which inferiors owe to superiors; but from the dominion of sin, the tyranny of Satan, the curse and irritating power of the law, and from subjecting our consciences to the rites, doctrines, ceremonies, and laws of men in the matter of worship. 3. Though civil liberty be much desired, so ignorant are we of the worth of freedom from spiritual bondage that we can hardly be excited to seek after it, or made to stand to it when attained, but are in daily hazard of preferring our former bondage to our present liberty.—*Fergusson.*

Bondage and Liberty.

I. **We are in bondage under sin.**

II. **We are subject to punishment.**—Implying: 1. Bondage under Satan, who keeps unrepentant sinners in his snare. 2. Bondage under an evil conscience, which sits in the heart as accuser and judge, and lies like a wild beast at a man's door ready to pluck out his throat. 3. Bondage under the

wrath of God and fear of eternal death.

III. **We are in bondage to the ceremonial law.**—To feel this bondage is a step out of it; not to feel it is to be plunged into it.

IV. **We have spiritual liberty by the grace of God.**—1. Christian liberty is a deliverance from misery. (1) From the curse of the law for the breach thereof. (2) From the obligation of the law whereby it binds us to perfect righteousness in our own persons. (3) From the observance of the ceremonial law of Moses. (4) From the tyranny and dominion of sin. 2. Christian liberty is freedom in good things. (1) In the voluntary service of God. (2) In the free use of all the creatures of God. (3) Liberty to come to God and in prayer to be heard. (4) To enter heaven.

V. **Christ is the great Liberator.**—He procured this liberty: 1. By the merit of His death. The price paid—His precious blood—shows the excellence of the blessing, and that it should be esteemed. 2. By the efficacy of His Spirit—assuring us of our adoption, and abating the strength and power of sin.

VI. **We are to hold fast our liberty in the day of trial.**—1. We must labour that religion be not only in mind and memory, but rooted in the heart. 2. We must join with our religion the soundness of a good conscience. 3. We must pray for all things needful.—*Perkins.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 2—6.

Christianity Superior to External Rites.

I. **External rites demand universal obedience.**—"Every man that is circumcised is a debtor to do the whole law" (ver. 3). The Galatians were in a state of dangerous suspense. They were on the brink of a great peril. Another step and they would be down the precipice. That step was circumcision. Seeing the imminence of the danger the apostle becomes more earnest and emphatic in his remonstrance. He warns them that circumcision, though a matter of indifference as an external rite, would in their case involve an obligation to keep the whole law. This he has shown is an impossibility. They would submit themselves to a yoke they were unable to bear, and from whose galling tyranny they would be unable to extricate themselves. Knowing this, surely they would not be so foolish as, deliberately and with open eyes, to commit such an act of moral suicide. There must be a strange infatuation in ritualistic observances that tempts man to undertake obligations he is powerless to perform, utterly heedless of the most explicit and faithful warnings.

II. **Dependence on external rites is an open rejection of Christ.**—"Christ shall profit you nothing; . . . is become of no effect unto you; ye are fallen from grace" (vers. 2, 4). Here the result of a defection from the gospel is placed in the most alarming aspect, and should give pause to the wildest fanatic. It is the forfeiture of all Christian privileges, it is a complete rejection of Christ, it is a loss of all the blessings won by faith, it is a fall into the gulf of despair and ruin. It cannot be too plainly understood, nor too frequently iterated, that excessive devotion to external rights means the decline and extinction of true religion. Ritualism supplants Jesus Christ. "It is evident that the disciples of the Church of Rome wish to lead us from confession and absolution to the doctrine of transubstantiation, thence to the worship of images, and thence to all the abuses which at the end of the fifteenth century and at the beginning of the sixteenth excited the anger and scorn of Luther, Calvin, Zwinglius, and others. The primary faith of the Reformers is in the words of Christ. The primary faith of the ritualists is in Aristotle. If the British nation is wise, it will not allow the Roman Church with its infallible head, or the

ritualists with their mimic ornaments, or those who are deaf to the teachings of Socrates and Cicero, of Bacon and Newton, to deprive them of the inestimable blessings of the gospel."

III. **Christianity as a spiritual force is superior to external rites.**—1. *It bases the hope of righteousness on faith.* "For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (ver. 5). Look on this picture and on that. Yonder are the Galatians, all in tumult about the legalistic proposals, debating which of the Hebrew feasts they shall celebrate and with what rites, absorbed in the details of Mosaic ceremony, all but persuaded to be circumcised and to settle their scruples out of hand by a blind submission to the law. And here on the other side is Paul with the Church of the Spirit, walking in the righteousness of faith and the communion of the Holy Spirit, joyfully awaiting the Saviour's final coming and the hope that is laid up in heaven. How vexed, how burdened, how narrow and puerile is the one condition; how large, lofty, and secure the other! Faith has its great ventures; it has also its seasons of endurance, its moods of quiet expectancy, its unweariable patience. It can wait as well as work (*Findlay*).

2. *Faith is a spiritual exercise revealing itself in active love.*—"Faith worketh by love" (ver. 6). In ver. 5 we have the *statics* of the religion of Christ; in ver. 6 its *dynamics.* Love is the working energy of faith. "Love gives faith hands and feet; hope lends it wings. Love is the fire at its heart, the life-blood coursing in its veins; hope the light that gleams and dances in its eyes." In the presence of an active spiritual Christianity, animated by love to Christ and to men, ritualism diminishes into insignificance. "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision" (ver. 6). The Jew is no better or worse a Christian because he is circumcised; the Gentile no worse or better because he is not. Love, which is the fulfilling of the law, is the essence of Christianity, and gives it the superiority over all external rites.

Lessons.—1. *Externalism in religion imposes intolerable burdens.* 2. *To prefer external rites is an insult to Christ.* 3. *The superiority of Christianity is its spiritual character.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 2-4. *Christianity nullified by Legalism.*

I. **To accept legalism is to reject Christ** (vers. 2, 4).

II. **Legalism demands universal obedience to its enactments** (ver. 3).

III. **Legalism is a disastrous abandonment of Christianity.**—"Ye are fallen from grace" (ver. 4).

Vers. 5, 6. *Righteousness attained by Active Faith.*—1. No personal righteousness entitles us to the blessed hope of the heavenly inheritance, but only the righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith. It is only the efficacious teaching of God's Spirit which can sufficiently instruct us in the knowledge of this righteousness and make us with security and confidence venture our hope of heaven upon it. 2. To impose the tie of a command on anything as a necessary part of divine worship wherein the word has left us free, or to subject ourselves to such command, is a receding from and betrayal of Christian liberty. 3. The sum of a Christian's task is faith; but it is always accompanied with the grace of love. Though faith and love are conjoined, faith, in the order of nature, has the precedency.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 6. *Religion is Faith working by Love.*

I. **External and bodily privileges are of no use and moment in the kingdom of Christ.**—1. We are not to esteem men's religion by their riches and external dignities. 2. We

are to moderate our affections in respect of all outward things, neither sorrowing too much for them nor joying too much in them.

II. **Faith is of great use and acceptance in the kingdom of Christ.**—1. We must labour to conceive faith aright in our hearts, by the use of the right means—the word, prayer, and sacraments, and in and by the exercises of spiritual invocation and repentance. 2. Faith in Christ must reign and bear sway in our hearts and have command over reason, will, affection, lust. 3. It is to be bewailed that the common faith of our day is but a ceremonial faith.

III. **True faith works by love.**—Faith is the cause of love, and love is the fruit of faith.—*Perkins.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7—12.

Disturber of the Faith—

I. **Checks the prosperous career of the most ardent Christian.**—"Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?" (ver. 7). The Galatians were charmed with the truth as it fell from the lips of the apostle; it was to them a new revelation; they eagerly embraced it, it changed their lives, and they strove to conform their conduct to its high moral teachings. The apostle was delighted with the result, and commended their Christian enthusiasm. They were running finely. But the intrusion of false teaching changed all this. Their progress was arrested, their faith was disturbed, they wavered in their allegiance, and were in danger of losing all the advantages they had gained. The influence of false doctrine is always baneful, especially so to new beginners, in whom the principles of truth have not become firmly rooted. The loss of truth, like inability to believe, may be traced back to an unhealthy corruption of the mind. The great danger of unsound doctrine lies in this, that, like a cancer, it rankles because it finds in the diseased condition of the religious life ever fresh nourishment.

II. **Is opposed to the divine method of justification.**—"This persuasion cometh not of Him that calleth you" (ver. 8). The disturber of the Galatians taught a human method of salvation—a salvation by the works of the law. This was diametrically opposed to the divine calling, which is an invitation to the whole race to seek salvation by faith. The persuasion to which the Galatians were yielding was certainly not of God. It was a surrender to the enemy. All error is a wild fighting against God, an attempt to undermine the foundations that God has fixed for man's safety and happiness.

III. **Suggests errors that are contagious in their evil influence.**—"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (ver. 9). A proverbial expression the meaning of which is at once obvious. A small infusion of false doctrine, or the evil influence of one bad person, corrupts the purity of the gospel. It is a fact well known in the history of science and philosophy that men, gifted by nature with singular intelligence, have broached the grossest errors and even sought to undermine the grand primitive truths on which human virtue, dignity, and hope depend. The mind that is always open to search into error is itself in error, or at least unstable (1 Cor. xv. 33; Eccles. ix. 18).

IV. **Shall not escape chastisement whatever his rank or pretensions.**—1. *Either by direct divine judgment.* "He that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be" (ver. 10). The reference here may be to some one prominent among the seducers, or to any one who plays the troubler. God will not only defend His own truth, but will certainly punish the man who from wicked motives seeks to corrupt the truth or to impair the faith of those who have embraced it. The seducer not only deceives himself, but shall suffer judgment for his self-deception and the injury he has done to others.

2. *Or by excision from the Church.*—"I would they were even cut off which trouble you" (ver. 12). An extravagant expression, as if the apostle said, Would that the Judaising troublers would mutilate themselves, as was the custom with certain heathen priests in some of their religious rites. The phrase indicates the angry contempt of the apostle for the legalistic policy, and that the troublers richly deserved to be excluded from the Church and all its privileges. The patience of the Gentile champion was exhausted, and found relief for the moment in mocking invective.

V. **Does not destroy the hope and faith of the true teacher.**—1. *He retains confidence in the fidelity of those who have been temporarily disturbed.* "I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded" (ver. 10). Notwithstanding the insidious leaven, the apostle cherishes the assurance that his converts will after all prove leal and true at heart. He has faithfully chided them for their defection, but his anger is directed, not towards them, but towards those who have injured them. He is persuaded the Galatians will, with God's help, resume the interrupted race they were running so well.

2. *His sufferings testify that his own teaching is unchanged.*—"If I preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? Then is the offence of the cross ceased" (ver. 11). The rancour and hostility of the legalists would have been disarmed, if Paul advocated their doctrine, and the scandalous "offence of the cross"—so intolerable to Jewish pride—would have been done away. But the cross was the grand vital theme of all his teaching, that in which he most ardently gloried, and for which he was prepared to endure all possible suffering. The value of truth to a man is what he is willing to suffer for it.

Lessons.—1. *The man who perverts the truth is an enemy to his kind.* 2. *The false teacher ensures his own condemnation.* 3. *Truth becomes more precious the more we suffer for it.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 7-10. *How Perfection is attained.*—Everything in the universe comes to its perfection by drill and marching—the seed, the insect, the animal, the man, the spiritual man. God created man at the lowest point, and put him in a world where almost nothing would be done for him, and almost everything should tempt him to do for himself.—*Beecher.*

Ver. 7. *The Christian Life a Race.*

I. **Christians are runners in the race of God.**—1. They must make haste without delay to keep the commandments of God. It is a great fault for youth and others to defer amendment till old age, or till the last and deadly sickness. That is the time to end our running, and not to begin. 2. We are to increase and profit in all good duties. We in this age do otherwise. Either we stand at a stay or go back. There are two causes for this: (1) Blindness of mind. (2) Our unbelief in the article of life everlasting. 3. We must neither look to the right nor the left hand, or to things behind, but press forward to the prize of eternal life. 4. We must not be moved with the speeches of men which are given of us, for or against. They are lookers on, and must have their speeches. Our care must be not to heed them, but look to our course.

II. **Christians must not only be runners, but run well.**—This is done by believing and obeying, having faith and a good conscience. These are the two feet by which we run. We have one good foot—our religion—which is sound and good; but we halt on the other foot. Our care to keep conscience is not suitable to our religion. Three things cause a lameness in this foot: the lust of the eye—covetousness, the

lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

III. **Christians must run the race from the beginning to the end.**—1. We must cherish a love and fervent desire of eternal life, and by this means be drawn through all miseries and overpass them to the end. 2. We must maintain a constant and daily purpose of not sinning.—*Perkins.*

Bad Companions.—"Bad company," wrote Augustine, "is like a nail driven into a post, which, after the first or second blow, may be drawn out with very little difficulty; but being once driven up to the head, the pincers cannot take hold to draw it out, which can only be done by the destruction of the wood." Of course it is useless to define bad company. Men and women, boys and girls, feel instinctively when they have fallen in with dangerous associates; if they choose to remain amongst them they are lost. So in the high tides, barks of light draught will float over Goodwin quicksands; in summer at low tide the venturous boys and young people will play cricket thereon; but neither can remain long in the neighbourhood. The time comes when the sands are covered with but a thin surface of water, and beneath is the shifting, loose, wet earth, more dangerous and treacherous than spring-tide ice; and then it is that to touch is to be drawn in, and to be drawn in is death. So is it with bad company.—*The Gentle Life.*

Cowardly Retreat.—General Grant relates that just as he was hoping to hear a report of a brilliant movement and victory of General Sigel, he received an announcement from General Halleck to this effect: "Sigel is in full retreat on Strasburg; he will do nothing but run; never did anything else." The enemy had intercepted him, handled him roughly, and he fled.

Vers. 8-10. *The Disintegrating Force of Error.*—1. Whatever persuasion cometh not of God, and is not grounded on the word of truth, is not to be valued, but looked upon as a delusion (ver. 8). 2. The Church of Christ, and every particular member thereof, ought carefully to resist the first beginnings of sin, for the least of errors and the smallest number of seduced persons are here compared to leaven, a little quantity of which secretly insinuates itself and insensibly conveys its sourness to the whole lump (ver. 9). 3. The minister is not to despair of the recovery of those who oppose themselves, but ought in charity to hope the best of all men, so long as they are curable; and to show how dangerous their error was by denouncing God's judgment against their prime seducers (ver. 10). 4. So just is God, He will suffer no impenitent transgressor, however subtle, to escape His search, or pass free from the dint of His avenging stroke, whoever he be for parts, power, or estimation.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 9. *Reform of Bad Manners.*

I. **We must resist and withstand every particular sin.**—One sin is able to defile the whole life of man. One fly is sufficient to mar a whole box of sweet ointment. One offence in our first parents brought corruption on them and all mankind; yea, on heaven and earth.

II. **We must endeavour to the utmost to cut off every bad example in the societies of men.**—One bad example is sufficient to corrupt a whole family, a town, a country. A wicked example, being suffered, spreads abroad and does much hurt.

III. **We are to withstand and cut off the first beginnings and occasions of sin.**—We say of arrant thieves they begin to practise their wickedness in pins and points. For this cause, idleness, excessive eating, drinking and swilling, riot, and vanity in apparel are to be suppressed in every society as the breeder of many vices.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 11. *The Perversion of Apostolic Preaching.*—There are two attempts or

resolves in constant operation as to the cross. One is man's, to accommodate to human liking and taste; the second is God's, to raise human liking and taste to it.

I. **The aim of man.**—The following may be named as the principal exceptions taken to the cross by those who rejected it:—

1. *It was an improbable medium of revelation.*—Man can talk loudly how God should manifest Himself. Shall the cross be the oracle by which He will speak His deepest counsels to our race?

2. *It was a stigma on this religion which set it in disadvantageous contrast with every other.*—It was unheard of that the vilest of all deaths should give its absolute character to a religion, and that this religion of the cross should triumph over all.

3. *It was a violent disappointment of a general hope.*—There was a desire of all nations. And was all that the earliest lay rehearsed, all that the highest wisdom enounced, only to be wrought out in the shameful cross?

4. *It was a humiliating test.*—Ambition, selfishness, insincerity, licentiousness, ferocity, pride, felt that it was encircled with an atmosphere in which they were instantly interrupted and condemned. Man is desirous of doing this away as a wrongful and unnecessary impression. He would make the offence of the cross to cease: (1) By fixing it upon some extrinsic authority. (2) By torturing it into coalition with foreign principles. (3) By transforming the character of its religious instructions. (4) By applying it to inappropriate uses. (5) By excluding its proper connections.

II. **The procedure of God.**—1. *It is necessary, if we would receive the proper influence of the cross, that we be prepared to hail it as a distinct revelation.* Science and the original ethics of our nature do not fall within the distinct province of what a revelation intends. Its strict purpose, its proper idea, is to make known that which is not known and which could not be otherwise known. Not more directly did the elemental light proceed from God who called it out of darkness than did the making known to man of redemption by the blood of the cross.

2. *When we rightly appreciate the cross, we recognise it as the instrument of redemption.*—This was the mode of death indicated by prophecy. The cross stands for that death; but it is an idle, unworthy superstition that this mode of death wrought the stupendous end. It is only an accessory. We must look further into the mystery. "He His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." It is that awful identity, that mysterious action, which expiates, and not the rood.

3. *When our mind approves this method of salvation, it finds in the cross the principle of sanctification.*—A new element of thought, a new complexion of motive, enter the soul when the Holy Spirit shows to it the things of Christ. We are new creatures. We reverse all our aims and desires. We are called unto holiness. (1) Mark the *process.* We had hitherto abided in death. But now we are quickened with Him. (2) Mark the *necessity.* Until we be brought nigh to it, until we take hold of it, the doctrine of the crucified Saviour is an unintelligible and uninteresting thing. (3) Mark the *effect.* There is a suddenly, though a most intelligently, developed charm. It is the infinite of attraction. All concentrates on it. It absorbs the tenderness and the majesty of the universe. It is full of glory. Our heart has now yielded to it, is drawn, is held, coheres, coalesces, is itself impregnated by the sacred effluence. The offence of the cross has ceased.—*R. W. Hamilton.*

Ver. 12. *Church Censure.*—The spirit of error may so far prevail among a people that discipline can hardly attain its end—the shaming of the person censured, and the preservation of the Church from being leavened. In which case the servants of God should proceed with slow pace, and in all lenity

and wisdom, and should rather doctrinally declare the censures deserved than actually inflict the censure itself.

Judgment on the Troublers of the Church.

I. **God watches over His Church with a special providence.**

II. **The doctrine of the apostles is of infallible certainty,** because the oppugners of it are plagued with the just judgment of God.

III. **Our duty is to pray for the good estate of the Church of God,** and for the kingdoms where the Church is planted.—*Perkins.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13—18.

Love the Highest Law of Christian Liberty.

I. **Love preserves liberty from degenerating into licence.**—"Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh" (ver. 13). Christian liberty is a great boon, but it is also a solemn responsibility. It is hard to win, and is worth the most gigantic struggle; but the moment it is abused it is lost. Men clamour for liberty when they mean licence—licence to indulge their unholy passions, unchecked by the restraints of law. Christian liberty is not the liberty of the flesh, but of the Spirit, and love is the master-principle that governs and defines all its exercises.

"He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves besides."

We know no truth, no privilege, no power, no blessing, no right, which is not abused. But is liberty to be denied to men because they often turn it into licentiousness? There are two freedoms—the false, where a man is free to do what he likes; the true, where a man is free to do what he ought. Love is the safeguard of the highest liberty.

II. **Love is obedience to the highest law.**—"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (ver. 14). "By love serve one another" (ver. 13). We may be as orthodox as Athanasius and as scrupulous as Jerome, we may be daily and ostentatiously building to God seven altars and offering a bullock and a ram on every altar, and yet be as sounding brass and as a clanging cymbal, if our life shows only the leaves of profession without the golden fruit of action. If love shows not itself by deeds of love, then let us not deceive ourselves. God is not mocked; our Christianity is heathenism, and our religion a delusion and a sham. Love makes obedience delightful, esteems it bondage to be prevented, liberty to be allowed to serve.

"Serene will be our days and bright,
And happy will our nature be,
When love is an unerring light,
And joy its own security."
Wordsworth.

III. **Love prevents the mutual destructiveness of a contentious spirit.**—"But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (ver. 15). The condition of the Galatians at this time was very different from the ideal Paul set before them. The quick, warm temperament of the Gauls was roused by the Judaistic controversy, and their natural combativeness was excited. It was easy to pick a quarrel with them at any time, and they were eloquent in vituperation and invective. The "biting" describes the wounding and exasperating effect of the manner in which their contentions were carried on; "devour" warns them of its destructiveness. If this state of things continued, the Churches of Galatia would cease to exist. Their liberty would end in complete disintegration. Love is the remedy propounded for all

ills—the love of Christ, leading to the love of each other. Love not only cures quarrels, but prevents them.

IV. **Love by obeying the law of the Spirit gains the victory in the feud between the flesh and the Spirit.**—"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh: . . . these are contrary the one to the other" (vers. 16, 17). The flesh and the Spirit are rivals, and by their natures must be opposed to and strive with each other. The strong man is dispossessed by a stronger than he—the Spirit. The master must rule the slave. "This soul of mine must rule this body of mine," said John Foster, "or quit it." The life of a Christian is lived in a higher sphere, and governed by a higher law—walking in the Spirit. Christianity says, Be a man, not a brute. Not do as many fleshly things as you can, but do as many spiritual things as you can. All prohibitions are negative. You can't kill an appetite by starvation. You may kill the flesh by living in the higher region of the Spirit; not merely by ceasing to live in sin, but by loving Christ. The more we live the spiritual life, the more sin becomes impossible. Conquest over the sensual is gained, not by repression, but by the freer, purer life of love.

V. **Love emancipates from the trammels of the law.**—"If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law" (ver. 18). The Spirit of love does not abolish the law, but renders it harmless by fulfilling all its requirements, without being compelled to it by its stern commands. Law does not help the soul to obey its behests, but it has nothing to say, nothing to threaten, when those behests are obeyed. To be under the law is to be under sin; but yielding to the influence of the Spirit, and living according to His law, the soul is free from sin and from the condemnation of the law. Freedom from sin, and freedom from the trammels of the Mosaic law—these two liberties are virtually one. Love is the great emancipator from all moral tyrannies.

Lessons.—1. *Love is in harmony with the holiest law.* 2. *Love silences all contention.* 3. *Love honours law by obeying it.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 13, 14. *The Service of Love*—

I. **Is the noblest exercise of Christian liberty** (ver. 13).

II. **Preserves Christian liberty from degenerating into selfish indulgence** (ver. 13).

III. **Is the fulfilment of the highest law** (ver. 14).

Ver. 13. *The Abuse of Christian Liberty.*

I. **To use it as an occasion of fleshly and carnal liberty.**—When men make more things indifferent than God ever made. Thus all abuses of meat, drink, apparel, rioting, gaming, dicing, and carding are excused by the names of things indifferent.

II. **Our liberty is abused by an immoderate use of the gifts of God.**—1. Many gentlemen and others offend when they turn recreation into an occupation. 2. When men exceed in eating and drinking. 3. They offend who, being mean persons and living by trades, yet for diet and apparel are as great gentlemen and gentlewomen.

III. **Liberty is abused when the blessings of God are made instruments and flags and banners to display our riot, vanity, ostentation, and pride.**—It is the fashion of men to take unto themselves a toleration of sinning. Some presume on the patience of God, others on the election of grace, and others on the mercy of God. A certain dweller in Cambridge made away with himself. In his bosom was found a writing to this effect: that God did show mercy on great and desperate sinners, and therefore he hoped for mercy though he hanged himself. Of

this mind are many ignorant persons, who persevere in their sins, yet persuade themselves of mercy.—*Perkins.*

The Right Use of Christian Liberty.

I. **We ourselves must be renewed and sanctified.**—The person must first please God before the action can please Him.

II. **Besides the lawful use of the creatures we must have a spiritual and holy use of them.**—1. The creatures of God must be sanctified by the word and prayer. 2. We must be circumspect lest we sin in the use of the creatures. In these days there is no feasting or rejoicing unless all memory of God be buried, for that is said to breed melancholy. 3. We must use the gifts of God with thanksgiving. 4. We must suffer ourselves to be limited and moderate in the use of our liberty. 5. Our liberty must be used for right ends—the glory of God, the preservation of nature, and the good of our neighbour.

III. **We must give no occasion of sinning by means of Christian liberty.** —*Ibid.*

Ver. 14. *The Law fulfilled in Love to Others.*

I. **The end of man's life is to serve God in serving others.**

II. **True godliness is to love and serve God in serving man.**—To live out of all society of men, though it be in prayer and fasting in monkish fashion, is no state of perfection, but mere superstition. That is true and perfect love of God that is showed in duties of love and in the edification of our neighbour. It is not enough for thee to be holy in church; thou mayest be a saint in church and a devil at home. —*Ibid.*

Regard for a Neighbour's Rights.—Speaking of the early American prairie settlements a modern historian says: "Theft was almost unknown. The pioneers brought with them the same rigid notions of honesty which they had previously maintained. A man in Mancoupin county left his waggon loaded with corn stuck in the prairie mud for two weeks near a frequented road. When he returned he found some of his corn gone, but there was money enough tied in the sacks to pay for what was taken."

Ver. 15. *Church Quarrels.*—1. When schism in a Church is not only maintained on the one hand with passion, strife, reproaches, and real injuries, but also impugned on the other hand, not so much with the sword of the Spirit as with the same fleshly means, then is it the forerunner and procuring cause of desolation and ruin to both parties and to the whole Church. 2. As it is a matter of great difficulty to make men of credit and parts, being once engaged in contentious debates, to foresee the consequence of their doing so further than the hoped-for victory against the contrary party, so it were no small wisdom, before folk meddle with strife, seriously to consider what woeful effects may follow to the Church of God.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 16. *The Positiveness of the Divine Life.*

I. **There are two ways of dealing with every vice.**—One is to set to work directly to destroy the vice; that is the negative way. The other is to bring in as overwhelmingly as possible the opposite virtue, and so to crowd and stifle and drown out the vice; that is the positive way. Everywhere the negative and positive methods of treatment stand over against each other, and men choose between them. A Church is full of errors and foolish practices. It is possible to attack those follies outright, showing conclusively how foolish they are; or it is possible, and it is surely better, to wake up the true spiritual life in that Church which shall itself shed those follies and cast them out, or at least rob them of their worst harmfulness. The application of the same principle is seen in matters of taste, matters of reform, and in matters of opinion.

II. **In St. Paul and in all the New**

Testament there is nothing more beautiful than the clear, open, broad way in which the positive culture of human character is adopted and employed.—We can conceive of a God standing over His moral creatures, and, whenever they did anything wrong, putting a heavy hand on the malignant manifestation and stifling it, and so at last bringing them to a tight, narrow, timid goodness—the God of repression. The God of the New Testament is not that. We can conceive of another God who shall lavish and pour upon His children the chances and temptations to be good; in every way shall make them see the beauty of goodness; shall so make life identical with goodness that every moment spent in wickedness shall seem a waste, almost a death; shall so open His Fatherhood and make it real to them that the spontaneousness of the Father's holiness is re-echoed in the child; not the God of restraint, but the God whose symbols are the sun, the light, the friend, the fire—everything that is stimulating, everything that fosters, encourages, and helps. When we read in the New Testament, lo, that is the God whose story is written there, the God whose glory we see in the face of Jesus Christ. The distinction is everywhere. Not merely by trying not to sin, but by entering further and further into the new life in which, when it is completed, sin becomes impossible; not by merely weeding out wickedness, but by a new and supernatural cultivation of holiness, does the saint of the New Testament walk on the ever-ascending pathway of growing Christliness and come at last perfectly to Christ.

III. **This character of the New Testament must be at bottom in conformity with human nature.** — The Bible and its Christianity are not in contradiction against the nature of the man they try to save. They are at war with his corruptions, and, in his own interest, they are for ever labouring to assert and re-establish his true self. Man's heart is always rebelling against repression as a continuous and regular thing. There is a great human sense that not suppression but expression is the true life. It is the self-indulgence of the highest and not the self-surrender of the lowest that is the great end of the gospel. The self-sacrifice of the Christian is always an echo of the self-sacrifice of Christ. Nothing can be more unlike the repressive theories of virtue in their methods and results than the way in which Christ lived His positive life, full of force and salvation. The way to get out of self-love is to love God. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."—*Phillips Brooks.*

The Flesh and the Spirit.

I. When St. Paul talks of man's flesh **he means by it man's body, man's heart and brain, and all his bodily appetites and powers**—what we call a man's constitution, the animal part of man. Man is an animal with an immortal spirit in it, and this spirit can feel more than pleasure and pain; it can feel trust, hope, peace, love, purity, nobleness, independence, and, above all, it can feel right and wrong. There is the infinite difference between an animal and man, between our flesh and our spirit; an animal has no sense of right and wrong.

II. **There has been many a man in this life who had every fleshly enjoyment which this world can give, and yet whose spirit was in hell all the while, and who knew it;** hating and despising himself for a mean, selfish villain, while all the world round was bowing down to him and envying him as the luckiest of men. A man's flesh can take no pleasure in spiritual things, while man's spirit of itself can take no pleasure in fleshly things. Wickedness, like righteousness, is a spiritual thing. If a man sins, his body is not in fault; it is his spirit, his weak, perverse will, which will sooner listen to what his flesh tells him is pleasant than to what God tells him is right. This is the secret of the battle of life.

III. **Because you are all fallen creatures there must go on in you this sore lifelong battle between your spirit and your flesh**—your spirit trying to be master and guide, and your flesh rebelling and trying to conquer your spirit and make you a mere animal, like a fox in cunning, a peacock in vanity, or a hog in greedy sloth. It is your sin and your shame if your spirit does not conquer your flesh, for God has promised to help your spirit. Ask Him, and His Spirit will fill you with pure, noble hopes, with calm, clear thoughts, and with deep, unselfish love to God and man; and instead of being the miserable slave of your own passions, and of the opinions of your neighbours, you will find that where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, true freedom, not only from your neighbours' sins, but, what is far better, freedom from your own.—*C. Kingsley.*

Walking in the Spirit.

I. **The Spirit is a divine nature, quality, or condition whereby we are made conformable to Christ.**—1. *It is a rich and liberal grace of God.* It contains the seeds of all virtues. 2. *Its largeness.* The Spirit is in all the powers of them who are regenerate in mind, conscience, will, affections, and in the sensual appetite. 3. *Its sincerity.* The grace of God is without falsehood or guile. 4. *Its excellency.* The spirit of grace in Christians is more excellent than the grace of creation, in respect of the beginning thereof, and in respect of constancy. 5. *Its liveliness*, whereby the Spirit is effectual in operation. (1) The Spirit works in and by the word of God. (2) Works by degrees, to make us feel our need of Christ, and to kindle in us a desire for reconciliation with God. (3) Works to write the law in our hearts.

II. **Walking in the Spirit is to order our lives according to the direction and motion of the Spirit.**—1. *The Spirit renews our nature.* (1) Makes us put a further beginning to our actions than nature can, causing us to do them in faith. (2) To do our actions in a new manner, in obedience to the word. (3) Makes us put a new end to our actions—to intend and desire to honour God. 2. *We must become spiritual men.* Must do things lawful in a spiritual manner. 3. *We must not judge any man's estate before God by any one or some few actions*, good or bad, but by his walking, by the course of his life.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 17. *The Strife of the Flesh and Spirit.*

I. **Man, under the influence of corruption, is called flesh.**—He may be said to be a spiritual being because he is possessed of an immortal spirit; but the term flesh seems to be awfully appropriate, because he is wholly and exclusively under the dominion of matter. In the text it implies the evil principle that inhabits the bosom of man. It is the mighty autocrat of humanity in the wreck of the Fall. Sin is such a mighty monster that none can bind him in fetters of iron and imprison Him but God Himself. In the operation of weaving, different materials cross each other in the warp and woof in order to make one whole, and this is the case with the family of heaven here below. Sin and grace are perpetually crossing each other.

II. **The spiritual offspring which is born of God is called the new man.**—It is the junior offspring, the junior disposition, the offspring of the second Adam. Corruption has its root only in humanity. Not so with grace. This springs alone from God. The new man lives in him; his head is above the skies, his feet lower than hell; and the reason why he is destined to be conqueror is that he fights in and under the inspiration of Heaven.

III. **These two principles are in a state of ceaseless warfare, ever opposed to each other.**—They are like two armies, sometimes encamped, at others engaged in terrible conflict; but, whether apparently engaged or not, each seeks the destruction of the

other perpetually. They are and must be ever opposed, till one fall; one must perish and the other live eternally. Where there is no conflict there can be no grace.

IV. **Consider the wisdom and valour evinced by this new principle.**—It is illumined by the Spirit and by the truth of God. The sun does not give me an eye. God alone can confer this organ; yet it is equally true my eye must attain its full vigour in the light of the sun: so the external means are necessary to teach us what God is, and to develop all the principles of the new man, to clothe it with the panoply of Deity, and to lead it on from battle to battle, and from victory to victory, till the last battle is eventually fought, the last victory won, and the fruits of triumph enjoyed for ever.—*William Howels.*

Ver. 18. *The Leading of the Spirit.*—1. The new man performs the office of guide to the godly in all actions truly spiritual. (1) As it is ruled by the word, which is the external light and lantern to direct our steps. (2) The work of grace itself is the internal light whereby the regenerate man spiritually understands the things of God. (3) The same work of grace being actuated by the continual supply of exciting grace from the Spirit is a strengthening guide to all spiritual actions. 2. The natural man is so much a slave to his sinful lusts that the things appointed by God to curb and make them weaker are so far from bringing this about that his lusts are thereby enraged and made more violent. The rigidity of the law, which tends to restrain sin, is turned by the unregenerate man into an occasion for fulfilling his lusts.—*Fergusson.*

The Guidance of the Spirit.

I. **Preservation,** whereby the Holy Ghost maintains the gift of regeneration in them that are regenerate.

II. **Co-operation,** whereby the will of God, as the first cause, works together with the regenerate will of man, as the second cause. Without this co-operation man's will brings forth no good action; no more than the tree which is apt to bring forth fruit yields fruit indeed till it have the co-operation of the sun, and that in the proper season of the year.

III. **Direction,** whereby the Spirit of God ordereth and establisheth the mind, will, and affections in good duties.

IV. **Excitation,** whereby the Spirit stirs and still moves the will and mind after they are regenerate, because the grace of God is hindered and oppressed by the flesh.

V. **Privilege of believers not to be subject to the ceremonial law.**—"Ye are not under the law." Not under the law respecting its curse and condemnation, though we are all under law, as it is the rule of good life.—*Perkins.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 19—21.

The Works of the Flesh—

I. **Are offensively obtrusive.**—"Now the works of the flesh are manifest" (ver. 19). Sin, though at first committed in secret, will by-and-by work to the surface and advertise itself with shameless publicity. The rulers of the civilised world in the first century of the Christian era, such as Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, Domitian, are the execration of history as monsters of vice and cruelty. Their enormities would have been impossible if the people they governed had not been equally corrupt. It is the nature of evil to develop a terrible energy the more it is indulged, and its works are apparent in every possible form of wickedness. "Every man blameth the devil for his sins; but the great devil, the house-devil of every man that eateth and lieth in every man's bosom, is that idol which killeth all—himself."

II. **Furnish a revolting catalogue.**—The sins enumerated may be grouped into four classes:—

1. *Sensual passions.*—"Adultery [omitted in the oldest MSS.], fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness" (ver. 19). Fornication was practically universal. Few were found, even among severe moralists, to condemn it. It is a prostitution of the physical nature which Jesus Christ wore and still wears, which He claims for the temple of His Spirit, and will raise from the dead to share His immortality. *Uncleanness* is the general quality of licentiousness, and includes whatever is contaminating in word or look, in gesture or in dress, in thought or sentiment. *Lasciviousness* is uncleanness open and shameless. It is the final loathsome analysis of the works of the flesh.

2. *Unlawful dealing in things spiritual.*—"Idolatry, witchcraft [sorcery]" (ver. 20). Idolatry and sensuality have always been closely related. Some of the most popular pagan systems were purveyors of lust, and lent to it the sanctions of religion. When man loses the true conception of God he becomes degraded. *Sorcery* is closely allied to idolatry. A low, naturalistic notion of the divine lends itself to immoral purposes. Men try to operate upon it by material causes, and to make it a partner in evil. Magical charms are made the instruments of unholy indulgence.

3. *Violations of brotherly love.*—"Hatred [enmities], variance [strife], emulations [jealousies], wrath [ragings], strife [factions], seditions [divisions], heresies [keen controversial partisanship], envyings, murders" (vers. 20, 21). A horrible progeny of evils having their source in a fruitful hotbed of unreasoning hatred, each vice preying upon and feeding the other. Settled rancour is the worst form of contentiousness. It nurses its revenge, waiting, like Shylock, for the time when it shall "feed fat its ancient grudge."

4. *Intemperate excesses.*—"Drunkenness, revellings, and such like" (ver. 21). These are the vices of a barbarous people. Our Teutonic and Celtic forefathers were alike prone to this kind of excess. The Greeks were a comparatively sober people. The Romans were more notorious for gluttony than for hard drinking. The practice of seeking pleasure in intoxication is a remnant of savagery which exists to a shameful extent in our own country. With Europe turned into one vast camp, and its nations groaning audibly under the weight of their armaments, with hordes of degrading women infesting the streets of its cities, with discontent and social hatred smouldering throughout its industrial populations, we have small reason to boast of the triumphs of modern civilisation. Better circumstances do not make better men (*Findlay*).

III. **Exclude the sinner from the kingdom of God.**—"They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (ver. 21). How poor life seems outside that kingdom! How beautiful and glorious inside its gates! If I tried to tell you how Christ brings us there, I should repeat to you once more the old familiar story. He comes and lives and dies for us. He touches us with gratitude. He sets before our softened lives His life. He makes us see the beauty of holiness and the strength of the spiritual life in Him. He transfers His life to us through the open channel of faith, and so we come to live as He lives, by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. How old the story is, but how endlessly fresh and true to Him whose own career it describes (*Phillips Brooks*). Exclusion from the kingdom of God is man's own act; it is self-exclusion. He *will not* enter in; he loves darkness rather than light.

Lessons.—1. *Sin is an active principle whose works are perniciously evident.* 2. *Sin is the primal cause of every possible vice.* 3. *Sin persisted in involves moral ruin.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 19-21. *Biblical Account of Sin.*—A mournful catalogue of words, based on a great variety of images, is employed in Scripture to describe the state of sinfulness which man inherits from his birth. Sometimes it is set forth as the *missing of a mark or aim*; sometimes as the *transgressing of a line*—the word occurs seven times in the New Testament, and is twice applied to Adam's fall (Rom. v. 14; 1 Tim. ii. 14); sometimes as *disobedience to a voice, i.e.* to hear carelessly, to take no heed of—the word occurs three times (Rom. v. 19; 2 Cor. x. 6; Heb. ii. 2); sometimes as *ignorance of what we ought to have done* (Heb. ix. 7); sometimes as *a defect or discomfiture*—to be worsted, because, as Gerhard says, "A sinner yields to, is worsted by, the temptations of the flesh and of Satan"; sometimes as *a debt* (Matt. vi. 12); sometimes as *disobedience to law*—the word occurs fourteen times in the New Testament, and is generally translated by "iniquity." The last figure is employed in the most general definition of sin given in the New Testament—*sin is the transgression of the law* (1 John iii. 4).—*Trench and Maclear.*

The Works of the Flesh.

I. **Sins against chastity.**—Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, wantonness. 1. We must stock up the root of these things, mortify the passion of concupiscence. 2. All occasions of these sins must be cut off, two especially, idleness and the pampering of the body. 3. All signs of these vices must be avoided, any speech or action that may give suspicion of incontinent disposition, as light talk, wanton behaviour, curiousness and excess in trimming of the body, suspected company.

II. **Sins against religion.**—Idolatry, witchcraft, heresies.

III. **Sins against charity.**—Enmity, debate, emulations, anger, contention, seditions.

IV. **Sins against temperance.**—Drunkenness, gluttony. 1. We may use meat and drink not only for necessity, but also for delight. 2. That measure of meat and drink which in our experience makes us fit both in body and mind for the service of God and the duties of our calling is convenient and lawful. To be given to drinking and to love to sit by the cup, when there is no drunkenness, is a sin. Drunkenness: (1) Destroys the body. (2) Hurts the mind. (3) Vile imaginations and affections that are in men when they are drunk remain in them when they are sober, so being sober they are drunk in affection.—*Perkins.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 22—26.

The Fruit of the Spirit—

I. **Is evident in manifold Christian virtues.**—1. *Virtues describing a general state of heart.* "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace" (ver. 22). *Love* is foremost of the group of Christian graces, and gives a nameless charm to all the rest, for there is an element of love in all true goodness. Love derives its power from being in the first place love to God. When the soul centres its affection in God through Christ all its outgoings are influenced and regulated accordingly. *Joy* is the product of love. A philosophy or religion which has no room for the joy and pleasure of man is as little conversant with the wants of man as with the will of God. "Joy in the Lord quickens and elevates, while it cleanses all other emotions. It gives a new glow to life. It sheds a diviner meaning, a brighter aspect, over the common face of earth and sky. Joy is the beaming countenance, the elastic step, the singing voice, of Christian goodness." *Peace* is the holy calm breathed into the soul by a pardoning God. It is the gift of Christ, giving rest to the soul in the midst of external agitations.

"It is a settled quiet of the heart, a deep, brooding mystery that 'passeth all understanding,' the stillness of eternity entering the spirit, the Sabbath of God. It is the calm, unruffled brow, the poised and even temper which Christian goodness wears."

2. *Virtues exercised in the Christian's intercourse with his neighbour.*—"Long-suffering, gentleness, goodness." Charity suffereth long. The heart at peace with God has patience with men. *Longsuffering* is the patient magnanimity of Christian goodness, the broad shoulders on which it "beareth all things." *Gentleness* (or kindness, as the word is more frequently and better rendered) resembles longsuffering in finding its chief objects in the evil and unthankful. But while the latter is passive and self-contained, kindness is an active, busy virtue. It is the thoughtful insight, the delicate tact, the gentle ministering hand of charity. Linked with kindness comes *goodness*, which is its other self, differing from it as only twin sisters may, each fairer for the beauty of the other. Goodness is perhaps more affluent, more catholic in its bounty; kindness more delicate and discriminating. Goodness is the honest, generous face, the open hand of charity (*Findlay*).

3. *Virtues indicating the principles which regulate the Christian's life.*—"Faith [honesty, trustworthiness], meekness, temperance" (vers. 22, 23). The *faith* that unites man to God in turn joins man to his fellows. Faith in the divine Fatherhood becomes trust in the human brotherhood. He who doubts every one is even more deceived than the man who blindly confides in every one. Trustfulness is the warm, firm clasp of friendship, the generous and loyal homage which goodness ever pays to goodness. *Meekness* is the other side of faith. It is not tameness and want of spirit; it comports with the highest courage and activity, and is a qualification for public leadership. It is the content and quiet mien, the willing self-effacement, that is the mark of Christ-like goodness. *Temperance*, or self-control, is the third of Plato's cardinal virtues. Temperance is a practised mastery of self. It covers the whole range of moral discipline, and concerns every sense and passion of our nature. It is the guarded step, the sober, measured walk in which Christian goodness keeps the way of life, and makes straight paths for stumbling and straying feet (*Ibid.*).

II. **Violates no law.**—"Against such there is no law" (ver. 23; comp. ver. 18). The fruit of the Spirit is love; and the law, so far from being against love, commands it (ver. 14). The practice of love and all its works is the fulfilling of the law and disarms it of all terror. The expression, "Against such there is no law," so far from being more than superfluous, as Hofmann asserts, is intended to make evident how it is that, by virtue of this, their moral frame, those who are led by the Spirit are not subject to the Mosaic law. For whosoever is so constituted that a law is not against him, over such a one the law has no power.

III. **Indicates the reality of a great spiritual change.**—1. *The old self-hood is crucified.* "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh" (ver. 24). This well expresses how sin must, little by little, be disabled and slain, for the crucified man did not die at once. He was first made fast with nails to the cross, and then kept there, till through hunger and thirst and loss of blood he became weaker and weaker, and finally died. We are to be executioners, dealing cruelly with the body of sin which caused the acting of all cruelties on the body of Christ.

2. *A new law now regulates the life.*—"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (ver. 25). The life is governed, not by the law of the flesh, but of the Spirit. The electrician can demagnetise and remagnetise a bar of iron, but the biologist cannot devitalise a plant or an animal and revivify it again. Spiritual life is not a visit from a force, but a resident tenant in the soul. The Spirit who created the life within sustains it and directs all its outgoings.

3. *Everything provocative of strife and envy is carefully avoided.*—"Let us not be desirous of vainglory, provoking one another, envying one another" (ver. 26). Vaingloriousness was a weakness of the Galatic temperament; and is not unknown in modern Christian life. Superiority, or fancied superiority, in talents or status is apt to proudly display itself. It is indeed a pitiable exhibition when even spiritual gifts are made matter of ostentation, exciting the jealousy of inferior brethren, and creating discontent and envy. The cultivation of the fruit of the Spirit is the best remedy against all bitterness and strife.

Lessons.—1. *The fruit of the Spirit a suggestive contrast to the works of the flesh.* 2. *Consistency of life is the test of genuine religion.* 3. *The operations of the Spirit are in harmony with the highest law.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 22, 23. *The Fruit of the Spirit.*

I. **Love.**—1. The love of God. (1) Shown in a desire of fellowship with God. (2) To love the word of God above all earthly treasure, and to tread our own will underfoot. (3) The love of them that love God and Christ. 2. The love of our neighbour. This is love indeed, to show love and to do good to them that wrong and abuse us.

II. **Joy.**—1. To rejoice in the true acknowledgment of God. 2. To rejoice in the work of our regeneration. 3. To rejoice in the hope of eternal glory.

III. **Peace.**—To maintain peace and concord: 1. Neither take offence nor give offence. 2. Seek to edify one another; either do good or take good.

IV. **Longsuffering.**—To moderate our anger and desire of revenge when many and great wrongs are done us. Set and sow this plant in the furrows of your heart, and consider: 1. The goodness of God, who forgives more to us than we can forgive. 2. It is the duty of love to suffer and forbear. 3. It is a point of injustice to revenge ourselves, for then we take to ourselves the honour of God, and against all equity—we are the parties and judge and witness and all. 4. We are often ignorant of the mind of men in their actions, and of the true circumstances thereof, and so may easily be deceived.

V. **Gentleness.**—Right courtesy is with an honest heart to bless when we are wronged.

VI. **Goodness.**—The virtue whereby we communicate to others good things, for their good and benefit.

VII. **Faith.**—Faith towards man, which means: 1. To speak the truth from the heart. 2. To be faithful and just in the keeping of our honest promise and word. This faith a rare virtue in these days. The common fashion of them that live by bargaining is to use glorying, facing, soothing, lying, dissembling, and all manner of shifts. They that deal with chapmen shall hardly know what is truth, they have so many words and so many shifts.

VIII. **Meekness.**—The same in effect with longsuffering. The difference is that meekness is more general, and longsuffering the highest degree of meekness.

IX. **Temperance.**—The moderation of lust and appetite in the use of the gifts and creatures of God. 1. We must use moderation in meats and drinks. That measure of meat and drink which serves to refresh nature and make us fit for the service of God and man is allowed us of God and no more. 2. We must use moderation in the getting of goods. 3. In the spending of our goods—contrary to the fashion of many who spend their substance in feasting and company, and keep their wives and children bare at home. 4. In our apparel. To apparel ourselves according to our sex, accord-

ing to the received fashion of our country, according to our place and degree, and according to our ability.

X. **Against such virtues there is no law.**—1. No law to condemn. 2. No law to compel obedience. Spiritual men freely obey God, as if there were no law; they are a voluntary and free people, serving God without restraint. —*Perkins.*

Ver. 22. *Love an Attendant of Regeneration.*—1. Love is a delight in happiness. 2. Is universal. 3. Is just. 4. Is disinterested. 5. Is an active principle. 6. Is the only voluntary cause of happiness. 7. Is the only equitable spirit towards God and our fellow-creatures. 8. Is the only disposition which can be approved or loved by God.—*Dr. Dwight.*

The Powers of Love.—If these be the fruit of the Spirit, they cannot be mere matters of temperament. When philosophy gives an account of the human soul it can find only constitutional propensities and voluntary acquisitions. When we interrogate Christianity we are told besides of communicated sanctities, states of mind which inheritance cannot give or resolution command, which need some touch of God to wake them up, which are above us and yet ours, and seem to lie on the borderland of communion between the finite and the infinite Spirit.

I. **There is humane love,** which constitutes the humblest and most frequent form of unselfish feeling. It finds its objects among the miserable, and attaches itself to them in proportion to their woes. In human pity there is a strange combination of repulsion and attraction, which it is the paradox of philosophy to state, and the mercy of God to ordain; it cannot endure the sight of wretchedness, and yet can never leave it. But there is a work ordained for us which this impulse will not suffice to do. Fastening itself on suffering alone, it sees nothing else. Yet beneath the smooth and glossy surface of easy life there may hide itself many an inward disease which the mere glance of pity does not discern. Flourishing iniquity that gives no seeming pain it lets alone; invisible corruption may spread without arrest.

II. **There is imaginative or æsthetic love,** which attaches itself to objects in proportion as they are beautiful, kindles the enthusiasm of art, and completes itself in the worship of genius. Yet is this affection very barren until thrown into the midst of others to harmonise and glorify them. No reciprocal sympathy is requisite to this sentiment; that which is admired as beautiful does not admire in return. And above all there is a direct tendency to turn with indifference or even merciless repugnance from what is unlovely.

III. **There is moral love,** which has reference to persons only, not to things, which attaches itself to them in proportion as they are good, judges them by the standard of an internal law, and expresses itself in tones, not of tenderness as in pity, or of admiration as in the trance of beauty, but of grave and earnest approval. Even this moral love is not without imperfections. Its characteristic sentiment of approbation has always in it a certain patronising air not welcome to the mercy of a true heart, and more like the rigour of a Zeno than the grace of Christ.

IV. **There is a divine love,** directed first upon God Himself, and thence drawn into the likeness of His own love, and going forth upon other natures in proportion to their worth and claims. This is the crowning and calming term of all prior affections, presupposing them, and lifting them up from clashing and unrest to harmony and peace. The humane, the beautiful, the right, remain only scattered elements of good till they are gathered into the divine and blended into one by the combining love of God. —*Dr. Martineau.*

Love the Perfection of Character.—The

fruit of the *true* vine has been analysed, and in the best specimens nine ingredients are found. In poor samples there is a deficiency of one or other of these elements. A dry and diminutive sort is lacking in peace and joy. A tart kind, which sets the teeth on edge, owes its austerity to its scanty infusion of gentleness, goodness, and meekness. There is a watery, deliquescent sort which, for the want of longsuffering, is not easily preserved; and there is a flat variety which, having no body of faith or temperance, answers few useful purposes. Love is the essential principle which is in no case entirely absent, and by the glistening fulness and rich aroma which its plentiful presence creates you can recognise the freshest and most generous clusters, whilst the predominance of some other element gives to each its distinguishing flavour, and marks the growth of Eshcol, Sibmah, or Lebanon.—*Dr. James Hamilton.*

The Power of Meekness and Affection.—Once in Holland a person of high rank invited Tersteegen to be his guest. This individual imagined himself to have attained to a state of peculiar inward peace, and took occasion during dinner to criticise Tersteegen for being too active, and for not sufficiently knowing the ground on which he wrought. Tersteegen attended meekly and silently to all that was said; and when dinner was over he offered up a fervent prayer in which he commended his host to the Lord in terms of such affection and compassion that this great and warm-tempered man was so much struck and affected by it that his feelings overpowered him, and he fell upon the neck of his guest and begged his forgiveness.

Who are the Meek?—A missionary in Jamaica was once questioning the little black boys on the meaning of Matt. v. 5, and asked, "Who are the meek?" A boy answered, "Those who give soft answers to rough questions."

The Grace of Gentleness.

I. **It is not a gift, but a grace.**—It is not a natural demeanour, amiable and courteous, a soft, feminine compliance, but a grace of the Spirit which takes into it the strength of the divine. You may have the instinct of delicacy, a natural tenderness and affability, yet not have this grace of the Spirit which impels you for Christ's sake to deal gently and save men. It is the underlying motive which determines whether grace or nature reigns. How is it when your ideas and methods of doing good are thwarted? Moses seems to have in Zipporah what Socrates had in Xantippe, yet her abuse had no more abiding effect on him than the spray which angry waves toss against the rock. Calvin hearing of Luther's ire said, "Let him hate me and call me a devil a thousand times; I will love him and call him a precious servant of God."

II. **The cultivation of this grace will cost you many a struggle.**—You are to get the better of your temper on your knees. No minstrel as in the case of Saul can do the work. We must forgive in our heart those who offend us.

III. **The grace of gentleness is a queen with a train of virtues.**—It ennobles our whole nature. An English nobleman could not be bound to keep the peace, for it was supposed that peace always kept him. So we should suppose that every professed Christian would have this grace; but if you should put your ear to the door of some Christian homes, it would be like listening to a volcano. If you did not behold a sulphurous flame bursting out, you might hear a continual grumbling. A man said to me once, "When I see Mr. So-and-so my passion is bigger than myself, and I long to make him feel it." The Spirit of Christ leads us to pray for those who despitefully use us. Only as His temper prevails in us shall we be able

to illustrate the beauty of divine greatness.—*Homiletic Monthly.*

Constant Joy.—Father Taylor, the Boston sailor-preacher, when going out to make a call, said to his host on the doorstep, "Laugh till I get back."

Ver. 24. *Crucifying the Flesh.*

I. **What is meant by being Christ's.**—It is to accept of and have an interest in Christ in His prophetic, kingly, and sacerdotal offices. By His prophetic office we come to know His will; by His kingly office, ruling and governing us, we come to yield obedience to that will; and by His sacerdotal or priestly office we come to receive the fruit of that obedience in our justification.

II. **What is meant by the flesh.**—The whole entire body of sin and corruption; that inbred proneness in our nature to all evil, expressed by concupiscence. 1. *It is called flesh because of its situation and place, which is principally in the flesh.* 2. *Because of its close, inseparable nearness to the soul.* 3. *Because of its dearness to us.* Sin is our darling, our Delilah, the queen-regent of our affections; it fills all our thoughts, engrosses our desires, and challenges the service of all our actions. This reveals: (1) The deplorable state of fallen man. (2) The great difficulty of the duty of mortification. (3) The mean and sordid employment of every sinner—he serves the flesh.

III. **What is imported by the crucifixion of the flesh.**—1. *The death of it.* He that will crucify his sin must pursue it to the very death. 2. *A violent death.* Sin never dies of age. The conquest need be glorious, for it will be found by sharp experience that the combat will be dangerous. 3. *A painful, bitter, and vexatious death.* 4. *A shameful and cursed death.*

IV. **The duty of crucifying the flesh.**—1. *A constant and pertinacious denying it in all its cravings for satisfaction.* 2. *Encounter it by actions of the opposite virtue.*—*Robert South.*

Ver. 25. *Life and Walk in the Spirit.*—Life relates to what is inward, walk to what is outward.

I. **To live in the Spirit.**—1. The Spirit begins the life of God in the soul. 2. The Spirit gives new desires and changes all the motives of life. 3. The Spirit lives in us.

II. **To walk in the Spirit.**—1. The walk will follow from the life, for every kind of life is after its own kind and development. 2. Every outward manifestation will correspond to the inward principle of life, and will be marked by love to God and love to man. 3. Reputation will correspond to character and conduct to life.

III. **To be led by the Spirit.**—1. The Christian's life is a growth, his walk a progress; but he is led and guided by the Spirit. 2. No new revelation is made by the Spirit. He leads and guides by what is written in the word.

IV. **Learn our relations to the Spirit.**—1. We live under the Spirit's dispensation. 2. He is the Spirit of God, and so of life, truth, and authority. 3. He is the Spirit of Christ, and so unites us to Him. 4. If we live by the Spirit, let conversation and conduct be answerable thereunto.—*Homiletic Monthly.*

Walking in the Spirit.—

I. **Is to savour the things of the Spirit.**—To subject a man's soul to the law of God in all the faculties and powers of the soul. The things revealed in the law are the things of the Spirit, which Spirit must at no hand be severed from the word.

II. **To walk in the path of righteousness without offence to God or man.**

III. **To walk not stragglingly, but orderly by rule, by line and measure.**—To order ourselves according to the rule and line of the word of God. The life of a man will discover to the world what he is.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 26. *Vaingloriousness.*

I. **The exciting cause of many quarrels.**

II. **A source of envy and disappointment.**

III. **Unbecoming the dignity and aims of the Christian life.**

The Vice of Vainglory and its Cure.

I. **Vainglory is a branch of pride,** wherein men principally refer all their studies, counsels, endeavours, and gifts to the honouring and advancing of themselves. They who have received good gifts of God are often most vainglorious. Whereas all other vices feed upon that which is evil, this vice of vainglory feeds upon good things. A man will sometimes be proud even because he is not proud.

II. **The cure of vainglory.**—1. *Meditation.* (1) God resisteth all proud persons and gives grace to the humble, because the vainglorious man, seeking himself and not God, robs God of His honour. (2) It is the work of the devil to puff up the mind with self-liking and conceit, that thereby he may work man's perdition. (3) There is no religion in that heart that is wholly bent to seek the praise of men. The man who desires to be talked of and admired by others gives notice to the world that his heart is not sound in the sight of God. 2. *Practice.* (1) Endeavour to acknowledge the great majesty of God, and our own baseness before Him. (2) We ought to ascribe all good things we have or can do to God alone, and nothing to ourselves. (3) In all actions and duties of religion we must first endeavour to approve ourselves to God, and the next place is to be given to man. (4) When we are reviled we must rest content; when we are praised take heed. Temptations on the right hand are far more dangerous than those on the left. (5) Men who are ambitious, if they be crossed, grow contentious; if they prosper, they are envied by others. Abhor and detest vainglory; seek to preserve and maintain love.—*Perkins.*

CHAPTER VI.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Overtaken in a fault.**—Be caught red-handed in any transgression, the result of some sudden and overpowering gust of evil impulse. **Restore such an one.**—The same word used of a dislocated limb reduced to its place. Such is the tenderness with which we should treat a fallen member in restoring him to a better state. **In the spirit of meekness.**—Meekness is that temper of spirit towards God whereby we accept His dealings without disputing; then towards men whereby we endure meekly their provocations, and do not withdraw ourselves from the burdens which their sins impose upon us (*Trench*).

Ver. 2. **Bear ye one another's burdens.**—The word is "weights," something exceeding the strength of those under them. "One another's" is strongly emphatic. It is a powerful stroke, as with an axe in the hand of a giant, at censoriousness or vainglorious egotism. We are not to think of *self*, but of one another. To bear the burden of an erring brother is truly Christ-like. **And so fulfil the law of Christ.**—If you must needs observe a law, let it be the law of Christ.

Ver. 3. **He deceiveth himself.**—He is misled by the vapours of his own vanity, he is self-deceived.

Ver. 4. **Rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.**—In that his own work stands the test after severe examination, and not that he is superior to another.

Ver. 6. **Communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.**—Go shares with him in the good things of this life. While each bears his own burden he must think of others, especially in ministering out of his earthly goods to the wants of his spiritual teacher (see 2 Cor. xi. 7, 11; Phil. iv. 10; 1 Thess. ii. 6, 9; 1 Tim. v. 17, 18).

Ver. 7. **God is not mocked.**—The verb means to sneer with the nostrils drawn up in contempt. Excuses for illiberality may seem valid before men, but are not so before God.

Ver. 8. **He that soweth to his flesh.**—Unto his own flesh, which is devoted to selfishness.

Shall reap corruption.—Destruction, which is not an arbitrary punishment of fleshly-mindedness, but is its natural fruit; the corrupt flesh producing corruption, which is another word for destruction. Corruption is the fault, and corruption the punishment.

Ver. 9. **Let us not be weary: we shall reap, if we faint not.**—"Weary" refers to the will; "faint" to relaxation of the powers. No one should faint, as in an earthly harvest sometimes happens.

Ver. 11. **Ye see how large a letter I have written with mine own hand.**—At this point the apostle takes the pen from his amanuensis, and writes the concluding paragraph with his own hand. Owing to the weakness of his eyesight he wrote in large letters. He thus gives emphasis to the importance of the subjects discussed in the epistle.

Ver. 12. **Lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.**—They would escape the bitterness of the Jews against Christianity and the offence of the cross, by making the Mosaic law a necessary preliminary.

Ver. 13. **For neither they themselves keep the law.**—So far are they from being sincere that they arbitrarily select circumcision out of the whole law, as though observing it would stand instead of their non-observance of the rest of the law. **That they may glory in your flesh.**—That they may vaunt your submission to the carnal rite, and so gain credit with the Jews for proselytising.

Ver. 14. **God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross.**—The great object of shame to them, and to all carnal men, is the great object of glorying to me. **By whom the world is crucified unto me.**—By His cross, the worst of deaths, Christ has destroyed all kinds of death. Legal and fleshly ordinances are merely outward and elements of the world. To be crucified to the world is to be free from worldliness, and all that makes men slaves to creature fascinations.

Ver. 15. **But a new creature.**—All external distinctions are nothing. The cross is the only theme worthy of glorying in, as it brings about a new spiritual creation.

Ver. 16. **As many as walk according to this rule.**—Of life: a straight rule to detect crookedness. **Upon the Israel of God.**—Not the Israel after the flesh, but the spiritual seed of Israel by faith.

Ver. 17. **I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.**—The Judaising teachers gloried in the circumcision marks in the flesh of their followers; St. Paul in the scars or brands of suffering for Christ in his own body—the badge of an honourable servitude.

Ver. 18. **Brethren.**—After much rebuke and monition, he bids them farewell with the loving expression of brotherhood as his last parting word, as if Greatheart had meant to say, "After all, my last word is, I love you, I love you."

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

Mutual Sympathy in Burden-bearing.

I. **That sympathy towards the erring is a test of spiritual-mindedness.**—1. *Shown in the tenderness with which the erring should be treated.* "If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness" (ver. 1). Worldly and self-seeking men are often severe on a neighbour's fault. They are more likely to aggravate than heal the wound, to push the weak man down when he tries to rise than to help him to his feet. The spiritual, moved by genuine compassion, should regard it as their duty to set right a lapsed brother, to bring him back as soon and safely as may be to the fold of Christ. To reprove without pride or acrimony, to stoop to the fallen without the air of condescension, requires the spirit of meekness in a singular degree.

2. *Reflecting that the most virtuous may some day be in need of similar consideration.*—"Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (ver. 1). The disaster befalling one reveals the common peril; it is a signal for every member of the Church to take heed to himself. The scrutiny which it calls for belongs to each man's private conscience. The faithfulness and integrity required in those who approach the wrong-doer with a view to his recovery must be chastened by personal solicitude. The fall of a Christian brother should be in any case the occasion of heart-searching and profound humiliation. Feelings of indifference towards him, much more of contempt, will prove the prelude of a worse overthrow for ourselves.

II. **That sympathy in burden-bearing is in harmony with the highest law.**—"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (ver. 2). As much as to say, If ye will bear burdens, bear one another's burden; if ye will observe law, observe the highest law—the law of love. There is nothing more Christ-like than to bear the burden of a brother's trespass. Christ bore burdens which to us would have been intolerable and overwhelming. The heaviest burden becomes supportable when shared with loving sympathy. Kindness towards the needy and helpless is work done to Christ. There is a poetic legend among the Anglian kings that Count Fulc the Good, journeying along Loire-side towards Tours, saw, just as the towers of St. Martin's rose before him in the distance, a leper full of sores who put by his offer of alms and desired to be borne to the sacred city. Amidst the jibes of his courtiers, the good count lifted him in his arms and carried him along bank and bridge. As they entered the town the leper vanished from their sight, and men told how Fulc had borne an angel unawares! Mutual burden-bearing is the practical proof of the unity and solidarity of the Christian brotherhood.

III. **That no man can afford to be independent of human sympathy.**—1. *Fancied superiority to sympathy is self-deception.* "If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (ver. 3). Others will see how little his affected eminence is worth. Some will humour his vanity, many will ridicule or pity it, few will be deceived by it. Real knowledge is humble; it knows its nothingness. Socrates, when the oracle pronounced him the wisest man in Greece, at last discovered that the response was right, inasmuch as he alone was aware that he knew nothing, while other men were confident of their knowledge. It is in humility and dependence, in self-forgetting, that true wisdom begins. Who are we, although the most refined or highest in place, that we should despise plain, uncultured members of the Church, those who bear life's heavier burdens and amongst whom our Saviour spent His days on earth, and treat them as unfit for our company, unworthy of fellowship with us in Christ? (*Findlay*). The most exalted and gifted is never lifted above the need of fellow-sympathy.

2. *A searching examination into our conduct will reveal how little cause there is for boasting a fancied superiority.*—"But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another" (ver. 4). As if the apostle said: "Let each man try his own work. Judge yourselves instead of judging one another. Mind your own duty rather than your neighbours' faults. Do not think of your worth or talents in comparison with theirs, but see to it that your work is right." The question for each of us is not, What do others fail to do? but, What am I myself really doing? What will my life's work amount to when measured by that which God expects from me? The petty comparisons which feed our vanity and our class-prejudices are of no avail at the bar of God. If we study our brother's work, it should be with a view of enabling him to do it better, or to learn to improve our own by his example; not in order to find excuses for ourselves in his shortcomings. If our work abide the test, we shall have glorying in ourselves alone, not in regard to our neighbour. Not his flaws and failures, but my own honest work, will be the ground of my satisfaction (*Ibid.*).

IV. **That individual responsibility is universal.**—"For every man shall bear his own burden [load]" (ver. 5). No man can rid himself of his life-load; he must carry it up to the judgment-seat of Christ, where he will get his final discharge. Daniel Webster was present one day at a dinner-party given at Astor House by some New York friends, and in order to draw him out one of the company put to him the following question, "Will you please tell us, Mr. Webster, what was the most important thought that ever occupied your mind?" Mr. Webster

merely raised his head, and passing his hand slowly over his forehead, said, "Is there any one here who doesn't know me?" "No, sir," was the reply; "we all know you, and are your friends." "Then," said he, looking over the table, "the most important thought that ever occupied my mind was that of my individual responsibility to God"; and he spoke on the subject for twenty minutes. The higher sense we have of our own responsibility the more considerate we are in judging others and the more we sympathise with them in their struggles and trials. Æsop says a man carries two bags over his shoulder, the one with his own sins hanging behind, that with his neighbour's sins in front.

Lessons.—1. *Sympathy is a Christ-like grace.* 2. *Sympathy for the erring does not tolerate wrong.* 3. *Practical help is the test of genuine sympathy.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. *The Sins of Others.*

I. **The follies and misconduct of others are the choice subjects of conversation in every stage of society; and if we take slander out of these conversations, we rob them of their keenest fascination.** I have felt it, that fearful joy which the discovery of others' faults produces; and then I found nothing at all extravagant in the strongest expressions by which the Scriptures depict the depth of our fall and the depravity of our heart.

II. **One of our brethren has lapsed: but you who condemn him, have you never erred?** Do you know his history? Did he know what you know yourself? The fall of a brother should call forth a painful self-examination and a sincere humiliation before God.

III. **Real and profound compassion should be felt for the brother whom sin has overtaken.** But sympathy alone will not suffice. There is a sympathy which is mere weakness. Our mission lays upon us the duty of restoration. This is a delicate and sublime work, for it is the work of God, but the work of God destined to be accomplished by man. Do the work of Jesus Christ in the spirit of Jesus Christ. You must have for your fallen brethren a love without weakness and a holiness without pride. We cannot raise them *en masse*, and by I know not what a collective action which would exempt us from individual love and sacrifice. All will be of no avail unless each of us, in the post where God has placed him, acts upon those around him, and brings them all individually under that influence of love which nothing can either equal or replace. Have you never asked yourself with terror if you have not lost some soul? Do you know if, among all those unfortunate beings whom God will cast from His presence at the last day, more than one will not sorrowfully turn towards you and say, "It is thou, it is thou that hast lost me"?—*Eugene Bersier.*

Vers. 1, 2. *Christian Reformation.*

I. **A thief is the man who uses, in order to keep up appearances, that which does not justly belong to him,** whether that appearance be kept up by actually robbing his neighbour's pocket, or by delaying the payment of his just debts, or by stinting God and man of their dues in any way. Such a one has, for keeping up appearances, every advantage up to a certain point, and that point is the moment of detection. After that, all is changed. The detected thief is the most miserable of men. Two ways only are open to him by which he can endure life or carry on hope. One of these is to declare war against society, and become an open instead of a secret offender; the other is to begin anew, and strive to build up a fresh reputation under more favourable auspices, it may be by shrewder and deeper deceit, or it may be in the way of

genuine repentance and amendment. It is hard to say whether of these two is the more difficult or hopeless.

II. **Were we all true men, safe in our own consciences, fearless of detection in any point ourselves, we should be ever ready to help up an erring brother or sister**; but it is just because we are afraid of our own weak and unsound points that we are so reluctant ever to let a tarnished character again brighten itself. It is hardly possible to over-estimate the vast conspiracy which is arranged against the delinquent's effort to be reinstated in the favour of his fellow-men.

III. It would be by no means uninstructive to inquire **how far these feelings have influenced us in our views and practice with regard to the punishment of crime.** The last thing we believe in is reformation. You may view this as a judicial consequence of guilt. Terrible as may be the fears of a conscience dreading detection, far more difficulty, far more anguish, far bitterer self-reproach, is in store for the penitent struggling to regain peace and the fair name which he has lost. He carries the past evermore, as it were, branded on his brow, for men to see and avoid.

IV. While we rejoice and are grateful to God for His mercy to us, **we should at the same time tremble at our own unworthiness, and ever bear in mind our personal liability to fall into sin.** In such a spirit should we set about the blessed work of restoration, ever looking on the fallen as our brethren, going to meet them across the gulf which human Pharisaism has placed between them and us, the undetected; as common children of that God whose grace is able to raise them up again, bearing their burdens instead of disclaiming them and letting them sink under their weight, and so fulfilling the law of Christ.—*Dean Alford.*

The Restoration of the Erring.

I. **The Christian view of other men's sins.**—1. *The apostle looks upon sin as if it might be sometimes the result of a surprise.* 2. *As that which has left a burden on the erring spirit.* (1) One burden laid on fault is that chain of entanglement which seems to drag down to fresh sins. (2) The burden of the heart weighing on itself. (3) The burden of a secret, leading a man to tell the tale of his crimes as under the personality of another, as in the old fable of him who breathed his weighty secret to the reeds; to get relief in profuse and general acknowledgment of guilt; evidenced in the commonness of the longing for confession. (4) The burden of an intuitive consciousness of the hidden sins of others' hearts.

II. **The Christian power of restoration.**—1. *Restoration is possible.* 2. *By sympathy.* 3. *By forgiveness.* 4. *In the spirit of meekness.* 5. *The motive urging to attempt restoration.*—"Considering thyself," etc.—*F. W. Robertson.*

Brotherly Reproof.—1. A man must so reprove his brother as that it may be most for the advancement of God's glory, best for winning him to God, and least to the defaming of him abroad. He must pray that God would guide his tongue and move the other's heart. We may not traduce him to others, either before or after our reproof. 2. Every reproof must be grounded on a certainty of knowledge of the fault committed. 3. It is very requisite the reprover be not tainted with the like fault he reproves in another. 4. The vinegar of sharp reprehension must be allayed and tempered with the oil of gentle exhortation. The word "restore" signifies to set a bone that is broken. We are to deal with a man who has fallen and by his fall disjoined some member of the new man as the surgeon does with an arm or leg that is broken or out of joint—handle it tenderly and gently, so as to cause least pain. 5. Every reproof must be fitted to the quality and condition of him we reprove and to the nature of the offence. 6. Must be administered in fit time when we

may do the most good. 7. Secret sins known to thee or to a few must be reproved secretly. 8. We must be careful to observe the order set down by our Saviour (Matt. xviii. 15).—*Perkins.*

Vers. 2, 5. *Our Twofold Burdens.*—1. The burden which every man must bear for himself is the burden of his own sins, and from this burden no man can relieve him. 2. If a man be overtaken in a fault, we are to bear his burden by trying to restore him. 3. We are to do this in the spirit of meekness, bending patiently under the burden which his fault may cast on us. This spirit toward those who commit faults is wholly at variance with the natural man's way of acting, speaking, and thinking. We are to love our friends in spite of their faults, to treat them kindly, cheerfully, graciously, in spite of the pain they may give us. 4. Our Saviour has given us an example of what we should wish and strive to be and do. The law of Christ is the law of love.—*J. C. Hare.*

Ver. 2. *Bear One Another's Burdens.*—The law of Christ was lovingkindness. His business was benevolence. If we would resemble Him,—

1. *We must raise up the fallen.*—This was hardly ever attempted till Christ set the pattern. People went wrong, and the world let them go; they broke the laws, and the magistrate punished; they became a scandal, and society cast them out—out of the synagogue, out of the city, out of the world. But with a moral tone infinitely higher Christ taught a more excellent way.

2. *We must bear the infirmities of the weak.*—Very tiresome is a continual touchiness in a neighbour, or the perpetual recurrence of the same faults in a pupil or child. But if by self-restraint and right treatment God should enable you to cure those faults, from how much shame and sorrow do you rescue them, from how much suffering yourself.

3. *We must bear one another's trials.*—With one is the burden of poverty; with another it is pain or failing strength, the extinction of a great hope, or the loss of some precious faculty. A little thing will sometimes ease the pressure. In a country road you have seen the weary beast with foaming flank straining onward with the overladen cart and ready to give in, when the kindly waggoner called a halt, and propping up the shaft with a slim rod or stake from the hedgerow, he patted and praised the willing creature, till after a little rest they were ready to resume the rough track together. Many a time a small prop is quite sufficient.

4. *By thus bearing others' burdens you will lighten your own.*—Rogers the poet has preserved a story told him by a Piedmontese nobleman. "I was weary of life, and after a melancholy day was hurrying along the street to the river, when I felt a sudden check. I turned, and beheld a little boy who had caught the skirt of my cloak in his anxiety to solicit my notice. His look and manner were irresistible. Not less so was the lesson I learnt. 'There are six of us, and we are dying for want of food.' 'Why should I not,' said I to myself, 'relieve this wretched family? I have the means, and it will not delay me many minutes.' The scene of misery he conducted me to I cannot describe. I threw them my purse, and their burst of gratitude overcame me. It filled my eyes; it went as a cordial to my heart. 'I will call again to-morrow,' I cried. Fool that I was to think of leaving a world where such pleasure was to be had, and so cheaply." There is many a load which only grows less by giving a lift to another. A dim gospel makes a cold Christian; a distant Saviour makes a halting, hesitating disciple. — *Dr. James Hamilton.*

Ver. 2. *Christian Generosity.*

I. **The duty enjoined.**—1. It may apply to a weight of labour or bodily toil. 2. To a weight of personal

affliction. 3. To a weight of providential losses and embarrassments. 4. To a weight of guilt. 5. Of temptation. 6. Of infirmities.

II. **The enforcing motive.**—1. The apostle's requirement is worthy of the character of Christ, as it is a law of equity. 2. It is congenial with the Spirit of Christ. 3. It is agreeable to the example of Christ. 4. It is deducible from the precepts of Christ. 5. It has the approbation of Christ.—*Sketches.*

Bearing One Another's Burdens.—The metaphor is taken from travellers who used to ease one another by carrying one another's burdens, wholly or in part, so that they may more cheerfully and speedily go on in their journey. As in architecture all stones are not fit to be laid in every place of the building, but some below and others above the wall, so that the whole building may be firm and compact in itself; so in the Church those who are strong must support the weak. The Italians have a proverb—*Hard with hard never makes a good wall,* by which is signified that stones cobbled up one upon another without mortar to combine them make but a tottering wall that may be easily shaken; but if there be mortar betwixt them yielding to the hardness of the stones, it makes the whole like a solid continued body, strong and stable, able to endure the shock of the ram or the shot of the cannon. So that society, where all are as stiff as stones which will not yield a hair one to another, cannot be firm and durable. But where men are of a yielding nature society is compact, because one bears the infirmities of another. Therefore the strong are to support the weak, and the weak the strong; as in the arch of a building one stone bears mutually, though not equally, the burden of the rest; or as harts swimming over a great water do ease one another in laying their heads one upon the back of another—the foremost, having none to support him, changing his place and resting his head upon the hindermost. Thus in God's providence Luther and Melancthon were happily joined together. Melancthon tempered the heat and zeal of Luther with his mildness, being as oil to his vinegar; and Luther, on the other side, did warm his coldness, being as fire to his frozenness.—*Ralph Cudworth.*

Association (A Benefit Club Sermon).—1. This plan of bearing one another's burdens is not only good in benefit clubs—it is good in families, in parishes, in nations, in the Church of God. What is there bearing on this matter of prudence that makes one of the greatest differences between a man and a brute beast? Many beasts have forethought: the sleep-mouse hoards up acorns against the winter, the fox will hide the game he cannot eat. The difference between man and beast is, that the beast has forethought only for himself, but the man has forethought for others also. 2. Just the same with nations. If the king and nobles give their whole minds to making good laws, and seeing justice done to all, and workmen fairly paid, and if the poor in their turn are loyal and ready to fight and work for their king and their nobles, then will not that country be a happy and a great country? 3. Just the same way with Christ's Church, the company of true Christian men. If the people love and help each other, and obey their ministers and pray for them, and if the ministers labour earnestly after the souls and bodies of their people, and Christ in heaven helps both minister and people with His Spirit and His providence and protection, if all in the whole Church bear each other's burdens, then Christ's Church will stand, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.—*Charles Kingsley.*

Burden-bearing.

I. **Different kinds of burdens.**—1. *Those that are necessary.* 2. *Those that are superfluous.* 3. *Those that are imaginary.*

II. **What shall we do with them?**—1. *Reduce their number to the limits of necessity.* 2. *Some of these we are expected to carry ourselves.* 3. *Some we may expect our friends to help us to carry.* 4. *We may take them all to the Lord that He may either remove them or sustain us under them.*

Lessons.—1. *With grace burdens are removed or lightened.* 2. *In what way can we best help others with their burdens?* "Thou lightenest thy load by lightening his." 3. *Let our burdens be reduced to light running order.*—*Homiletic Monthly.*

Practical Christian Sympathy.

I. **Consider the burdens you can bear for others.**—All have to bear burdens. Some man can only bear for himself. Others he can be helped to bear, such as the burden of carnal tendency, persecution, anxiety over loved ones, affliction that is not punishment.

II. **Consider how we may bear the burdens of others.**—1. *We can bear them on our hearts in prayer.* 2. *We can lighten the burden by friendly help.* 3. *We can by the strength of our sympathies come under the burdens of others.*

III. **Bearing the burdens of others is the chief way by which we can fulfil the law of Christ.**—Nothing will give us such a resemblance to Him. He lived solely for others. He came voluntarily under the burden of man's miseries, sacrificing Himself for the race.

IV. **Consider the importance of obeying this injunction.**—1. *For our own sakes.* 2. *For the good of others.* 3. *For the prosperity of the Church.*—*The Lay Preacher.*

Ver. 5. *Burden-bearing.*

I. **There is the burden of personal responsibility.**—This comes out in the formation of character.

II. **There is the burden of toil.**—Among the steep precipitous mountains of Thibet the traveller meets long processions of hungry, ill-clad Chinamen, carrying enormous loads of tea. There they go, climb, climbing day after day up the rough sides of the mountains, each with his great burden on his back, eyes fixed on the ground, all silent, stepping slowly, and leaning on great iron-pointed sticks, till the leader of the gang gives the signal for a halt, and, after standing a few minutes, the heavy load again falls on the back and head, the body is again bent towards the ground, and the caravan is once more in motion. You do not wonder that, with a task so monotonous, these poor drudges should acquire a dreary, stupid look, little better than beasts of burden; and you feel sorry for those in whose lives there is a large amount of the like irksome and exhausting routine. Yet there are many who, in order to earn their daily bread, must go through a similar task.

III. **There is the burden of sorrow.**—Sorrow dwells beneath a king's robes as much as beneath a peasant's cloak; the star of the noble, the warrior's corslet, the courtier's silken vesture, cannot shut it out. That rural home is such a picture of peace we cannot believe that care or tears are there. That noble castle amidst ancient trees is surely lifted up in its calm grandeur above sighs and sadness. Alas! it is not so. Man is the tenant of both, and wherever man dwells sorrow is sure to be with him.

IV. **There is one burden which it is wrong to bear.**—It is a sin and a shame to you if you are still plodding along under the burden of unpardoned transgression. The load of guilt, the feeling that our sin is too great for the blood of Christ to expiate, or the grace of God to pardon—this burden it is wrong to bear.—*Dr. James Hamilton.*

Bearing our Burdens Alone.

I. **The loneliness of each one of us.**—One of the tendencies of these bustling times is to make us forget that we are single beings, detached souls. Each great star flung out like an atom of gold dust into space may seem lost amid the hundred of millions of mightier worlds that surround; and

yet no; it rolls on, grave in itself, careering in its own orbit, while its sister-stars sweep round on every side. We stand cut off from one another. We are to stave up side by side our own destiny, we are to be alone with our burdens, not lost in the forest of human lives.

II. **Look at some of the forms of this burden.**—1. *There is the burden of being itself.* 2. *The burden of duty.* 3. *The burden of imperfection and sin.* 4. *The burden of sorrow.* 5. *The burden of dying alone.* 6. *If a man is lost, he is lost alone; if saved, he is saved alone.—The Lay Preacher.*

Every Man has his Own Burden.

I. No man can pay a ransom for his brother, or redeem his soul from death, or satisfy the justice of God for his sin, seeing that every **man by the tenor of the law is to bear his own burden,** and by the gospel none can be our surety but Christ.

II. **We see the nature of sin that is a burden to the soul.**—It is heavier than the gravel of the earth and the sand of the sea.

III. We are not to wonder that **sin being so heavy a burden** should be made so light a matter by carnal men, for it is a spiritual burden.

IV. **The more a man fears the burden of his sins** the greater measure of grace and spiritual life he has, and the less he feels it the more is he to suspect himself.

V. The greatest part of the world are dead in their sins in that **they have no sense of feeling of this heavy burden.**

VI. We are to take heed of every sin, for **there is no sin so small but hath its weight.**—Many small sins will as easily condemn as a few great. Like as sands, though small in quantity, yet being many in number, will as soon sink the ship as if it were laden with the greatest burden.

VII. Feeling the weight and burden of our sins, **we are to labour to be disburdened;** and this is done by repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.—*Perkins.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 6—10.

Moral Sowing and Reaping.

I. **Beneficence by the taught towards the teacher is sowing good seed.**—"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" (ver. 6). The good things referred to, though not confined to temporal good, do certainly mean that. While every man must bear his own burden, he must also help to bear the burden of his brother. Especially must the taught go shares with his spiritual teacher in all things necessary. But beneficence shown towards the minister in temporalities is the least, and with many the easiest, part of the duty. Teacher and taught should mutually co-operate with each other in Christian work, and share with each other in spiritual blessings. The true minister of the gospel is more concerned in eliciting the co-operation and sympathy of the members of his Church than in securing their temporal support. If he faithfully ministers to them in spiritual things, they should be eager to minister unto him of their worldly substance, and to aid him in promoting the work of God. Every good deed, done in the spirit of love and self-sacrifice, is sowing good seed.

II. **By the operation of unchanging divine law the reaping will correspond to the kind of seed sown and the nature of the soil into which it is cast.**—"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh," etc. (vers. 7, 8). Men may wrong each other, but they cannot cheat God. To expect God to sow His bounties upon them, and not to let Him reap their gratitude and service, is mockery. But it is not God they deceive; they deceive themselves. For at last every one shall reap as he sows. The use made of our seed-time determines exactly, and with a moral

certainty greater even than that which rules in the natural field, what kind of fruitage our immortality will render. Eternity for us will be the multiplied, consummate outcome of the good or evil of the present life. Hell is just sin ripe—rotten ripe. Heaven is the fruitage of righteousness. "He that soweth to his own flesh reaps corruption"—the moral decay and dissolution of the man's being. This is the natural retributive effect of his carnality. The selfish man gravitates downward into the sensual man; the sensual man downward into the bottomless pit. "He that soweth to the Spirit reaps life everlasting." The sequence is inevitable. Like breeds its like. Life springs of life, and death eternal is the culmination of the soul's present death to God and goodness. The future glory of the saints is at once a divine reward and a necessary development of their present faithfulness (*Findlay, passim*).

III. **Sowing the seed of good deeds should be prosecuted with unwearied perseverance.**—1. *Because the harvest is sure to follow.* "Let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (ver. 9). Here is encouragement for the wearied, baffled worker. We have all our moments of despondency and disappointment, and are apt to imagine our labours are futile and all our painstaking useless. Not so. We are confounding the harvest with the seed-time. "In due season"—in God's time, which is the best time—"we shall reap, if we faint not." Our heavenly harvest lies in every earnest and faithful deed, as the oak with its centuries of growth and all its summer glory sleeps in the acorn-cup, as the golden harvest slumbers in the seeds under their covering of wintry snow.

2. *Because the opportunity of doing good is ever present.*—"As we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (ver. 10). The whole of life is our opportunity, and every day brings its special work. Opportunity is never to seek; it is ever present. There is not a moment without a duty. While we are looking for a more convenient opportunity we lose the one that is nearest to us. As members of the household of faith there is ever work enough to do—work that fits us to do good on a wider scale—"unto all men." True zeal for the Church broadens rather than narrows our charities. Household affection is the nursery, not the rival, of love to our fatherland and to humanity.

Lessons.—1. *Our present life is the seed-time of an eternal harvest.* 2. *The quality of the future harvest depends entirely on the present sowing.* 3. *God Himself is the Lord of the moral harvest.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 6. *Pastors and People.*

I. It is the duty of the people **to give their pastors not only countenance but maintenance.**

II. It is the law of nations, and a conclusion grounded on common equity, that those who spend themselves, as a candle, to give light to others and for the common good of all, **should be maintained of the common stock by all.**

III. Every calling is able to maintain them that live therein, therefore we may not think that **the ministry, the highest calling, should be so base or barren** as that it cannot maintain them that attend thereupon.

IV. Ministers are the Lord's soldiers, captains, and standard-bearers, and therefore **are not to go a warfare at their own cost.**

V. Ministers are to give themselves wholly to the building of the Church and to the fighting of the Lord's battles. Therefore they are to have their pay **that they may attend upon their calling without distraction.**

VI. It is the ordinance of God **that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.**—Ministers should

be liberally provided for, yet with moderation, that they draw not all men's wealth into their purses. He that would live of the gospel must teach the gospel. A benefit requires a duty, and diligence in that duty.—*Perkins.*

Ministerial Maintenance.—1. Seeing Christ's ministers are to bestow themselves wholly in the work of the ministry and not to be entangled with the affairs of this life, therefore the people of God, among whom they spend their strength, are bound by common equity to give them worldly maintenance, that they may be neither diverted from nor discouraged in their work of watching over souls. 2. This maintenance, though it should be moderate and such as may not through abundance occasion pride, luxury, and prodigality, yet should be liberal and creditable, such as may not only supply pinching necessities, but also that they may have wherewith to supply the necessities of the indigent, to educate their children so as they may sustain themselves and be profitable members both of Church and commonwealth. 3. The Church's maintenance is only due unto such ministers as have abilities to preach, and are faithful and diligent labourers in the word. Those who are unfit or unwilling to preach should be removed from their charge, and not suffered to eat up the Church's maintenance, feeding themselves and starving the souls of people committed to their charge.—*Fergusson.*

Vers. 7-9. *Deceived Sowers to the Flesh.*

I. **The solemnity of the apostle's warning.**—He seems to intimate that such is the audacious wickedness of the human heart, that it has within it so many latent mazes of iniquity, that they might be self-deceived either as to their apprehensions of that which was right before God, or as to their own actual condition in His sight; and he tells them God is not mocked by this pretended service, that to Him all hearts are open, and that in impartial and discriminating arbitration He will render to every man according to his deeds. It is sad to be deceived in a friend, in our estimate of health, in our computation of property; but a mistake about the state of the soul—a veil folded about the heart so that it cannot see its own helplessness and peril—this is a state of which thought shudders to conceive, and to describe whose portentousness language has no words that are sufficiently appalling. There can be no peril more imminent than yours. The headlong rider through the darkness before whom the dizzy precipice yawns; the heedless traveller for whom in the bosky woodland the bandits lie in ambush, or upon whom from the jungle's density the tiger waits to spring; the man who, gazing faintly upward, meets the cruel eye and lifted hand and flashing steel of his remorseless enemy; they of whose condition you can only poorly image, who in far dungeons and beneath the torture of a tyrant's cruelty groan for a sight of friend or glimpse of day; all around whom perils thicken hopelessly, and to whom, with feet laden with the tidings of evil, the messengers of disaster come,—how they move your sympathy, how you shudder as you dwell upon their danger, how you would fain stir yourselves into brave efforts for their rescue or their warning! Brethren, your own danger is more nearly encompassing and is more infinitely terrible.

II. **The import of the apostle's statement.**—We have largely the making or the marring of our own future—that in the thoughts we harbour, in the words we speak and in the silent deeds which, beaded on Time's string, are told by some recording angel as the story of our lives from year to year, we shape our character and therefore our destiny for ever. There are three special sowers to the flesh—the *proud*, the *covetous*, the *ungodly*. They are all spiritual sins—sins of which human law takes no cognisance, and to which codes of earthly jurisprudence

affix no scathing penalty. There is the greater need, therefore, that these spiritual sins should be disclosed in all their enormity and shown in their exceeding sinfulness and in their disastrous wages, in order that men may be left without excuse if they persist wilfully to believe a lie.—*W. M. Punshon.*

Vers. 7, 8. *The Double Harvest.*

I. **Our present life is a moral trial for another to come.**—On till death is our seed-sowing; after death is the sure and universal harvest. On till death is our moral trial; after death is the life of judicial retribution, alike for the just and the unjust.

II. **Human life has one or the other of two great characters, and will issue in one or the other of two great results.**—1. They sow to the flesh who live under the influence of their natural inclinations and desires, pleasing only themselves and despising or neglecting the holy will of God. They live to the Spirit the whole current of whose being has been supernaturally reversed under the grace of the gospel. 2. The sowers to the Spirit live. And this true and proper life of man, in its maturity and full perfection, is the great and glorious reward which, by divine appointment, shall eventually crown the labours of the sowers to the Spirit. The sowers to the flesh sow seed which brings forth death. Even now their life is death in rudiment, and in the end they must reap it in its full and eternal development. Degraded existence, miserable existence, everlastingly degraded and miserable existence.

II. **We are liable to delusions with respect to these great verities.**—All history and experience teem with illustrations of the spiritual spells and juggleries which men, prompted by the invisible potentate of evil, practise upon themselves, that so they may reduce to their convictions the sinfulness of sin, and may tone the booming of the great bell of Scripture menace down to the gentle whisper of an amiable reprimand.—*J. D. Geden.*

On the Difference between sowing to the Flesh and to the Spirit.

I. **The man who soweth to his flesh.**—It is to spend our lives in doing these works of the flesh—to lay out our time, our thoughts, and our care in gratifying the vain, sensual, and selfish inclinations which the evil state of the heart naturally and continually puts forth. Broken health, loathsome diseases, ruined fortunes, disappointed wishes, soured tempers, infamy, and shame are among those things which usually come from walking after the flesh.

II. **The man who soweth to the Spirit.**—It is to live under the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and in every part of our conduct to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit. He enjoys even at present the fruit of his labour: inward peace and joy, and a hope full of immortality.—*Edward Cooper.*

The Principle of the Spiritual Harvest.

I. **The principle is this, "God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."**—There are two kinds of good possible to men—one enjoyed by our animal being, the other felt and appreciated by our spirits. Reap *what* you have sown. If you sow the wind, do not complain if your harvest is the whirlwind. If you sow to the Spirit, be content with a spiritual reward, invisible, within, more life and higher life.

II. **The two branches of the application of this principle.**—1. Sowing to the flesh includes those who live in open riot. 2. Those who live in respectable worldliness. 3. Sowing to the Spirit, the harvest is life eternal. 4. The reward is not arbitrary but natural. The thing reaped is the very thing sown, multiplied a hundredfold. You have sown a seed of life, you reap life everlasting.—*F. W. Robertson.*

Ver. 7. *Sowing and Reaping in their bearing on the Formation of Individual Character.*—There are three plots in which every man is perpetually engaged in sowing and reaping—in the plot of

his thoughts, in the plot of his words, and in the plot of his deeds. And there is a storehouse into which the harvests from these three plots are being secretly but unmistakably garnered—the storehouse of individual character. The moral condition of the man to-day is the inevitable result of his thoughts, words, and deeds; his selfhood is rich or poor according to his sowing and reaping in these respective fields.

I. **Whatsoever a man sows in thought that will he also reap in the formation, tone, and tendency of his intellectual and moral nature.**—1. *Vain thoughts.* If we indolently sport with vain and foolish thoughts, they will inevitably produce a crop of the same kind. The mind will be garnished with flimsy and unprofitable fancies, inflated with a too conscious self-importance, and the outcome is heard in "the loud laugh that proclaims the vacant mind," and seen in the pompous swagger of the intellectual fop (Prov. xiii. 16; Ps. xciv. 11).

2. *Proud thoughts.*—The man dominated by pride is the most pitiable of objects. His pride of birth will not bear investigation into three generations, his pride of social status is snubbed in a way that leaves a wound that never heals, his pride of wealth smitten down by an unexpected turn of the ever-revolving wheel of fortune, and his pride of life withered by the passing breath of the great Destroyer. But he reaps what he sowed. He sowed the dragon's teeth of proud and boastful thoughts, and the monster grew up and devoured him (Prov. xvi. 18).

3. *Thoughts of sinful pleasure.*—If we allow the mind to dream of pleasures that are forbidden, the bloom of innocence is rubbed off never to be again replaced, the conscience is outraged till its voice is muffled and but feebly heard, one vile thought indulged breeds another that is viler still, and the moral atmosphere of the soul is poisoned. What he sows he reaps.

4. *Good thoughts.*—The mind that aims at the loftiest style of thought, declining to tolerate the presence of a debasing sentiment, that keeps in check the wild and savage brood of evil thoughts ever seeking to overrun and defile the mind, that cultivates a chaste imagination and cherishes the exalted and unselfish charity that "thinketh no evil"—reaps the result in an accession of intellectual vigour, in the creation of a nobler standard by which to judge of men and things, in the unbounded raptures of a refined and fertile imagination, and in the increase of power for doing the highest kind of work for God and humanity.

II. **Whatsoever a man sows in words that shall he also reap.**—1. *Bitter and rancorous words.* If a man studies how much of spiteful venom he can pack into a single sentence, how he can most skilfully whet and sharpen the edge of his words so as to make the deepest wound and raise the most violent storm of irritation and ill-feeling, unalterable as the course of nature the harvest is sure to come. "Our unkind words come home to roost." The man offensive with his tongue is the devil's bellows with which he blows up the sparks of contention and strife, and showers of the fiery embers are sure to fall back upon himself to scathe and destroy.

2. *False words.*—If we deliberately and maliciously concoct a lie, and utter the same with whispered humbleness and hypocritical commiseration, as sure as there is justice in the heavens, the lie will come back with terrific recompense upon the head of the originator.

3. *Kind and loving words.*—If we speak in the kindest spirit of others, especially in their absence, if we stand up for a friend unjustly maligned and defend him with dignity and faithfulness, if we study to avoid words which cannot but grieve and irritate, then as we have sown so shall we reap—reap the tranquil satisfaction of conscious inoffensiveness, and, best of all, the divine approval. "Heaven in sunshine will requite the kind."

III. **Whatsoever a man sows in**

deeds that shall he also reap.—1. *Cruel deeds.* If we take a savage delight in torturing beast or bird or insect, if we plot how we can inflict the most exquisite pain on our fellow-man, if we make sport of the anguish and distress of others which we make no effort to relieve, we shall inevitably reap the harvest—reap it in the embruting and degradation of our finer sensibilities, reap it in the tempest of rebellion and retaliation which those we outraged will launch upon us.

2. *Selfish deeds.*—If we live for our own selfish gratification, indifferent to the rights and woes of others; if we surrender ourselves to a covetous spirit, living poor that we may die rich—as we sow we reap. The thing we lived to enjoy ceases to gratify, and our noblest sentiments are buried amid the rubbish of our own sordidness.

3. *Generous and noble deeds.*—If we aim at the elevation of ourselves and others, if we seek to act on the highest level of righteousness and truth, if we are diligent, unwearied, and persistent in well-doing, then in due season we shall reap the harvest—reap it in a heightened and expansive nobility of character, in an intensified influence and enlarged capacity for doing good, and in the eternal enrichment of the divine plaudit, "Well done."

Be not Deceived.—This phrase occurs several times as preface to warning, seeming to indicate thus that the subject of the warning is one about which we are specially liable to deception, and upon examination we find that observation justifies the presumption. We are thus guarded against any deception as to the following important practical truths:—

I. **The contaminating influence of evil associations** (1 Cor. xv. 33).

II. **The personal responsibility of each for his own sin** (Jas. i. 16).

III. **Entrance into heaven conditioned on character** (1 Cor. vi. 9).

IV. **Human destiny, once settled, irreversible** (Gal. vi. 7).—*British and Foreign Evangelical Review.*

Ver. 8. *Sowing to the Spirit.*

I. **The natural man has no desire for immortality.**—He has not been seized with the earnest and real wish for a future life; but he is entirely bound by this world in all his thoughts, aims, and wishes: he identifies life and existence altogether with this world, and life out of this world is a mere name to him. He is shut up within the walls of the flesh and within the circle of its own present aims and projects.

II. **The spiritual man has a strong desire for immortality**, and it is the beginning and foundation of the religious life he leads here. Every field of action becomes unimportant and insignificant compared with the simply doing good things, because in that simple exercise of goodness lies the preparation for eternity.

III. **The natural and spiritual man are divided from each other by these distinctions**—one has the desire for everlasting life, the other has not. The success of the one perishes with the corruptible life to which it belongs; the success of the other endures for all ages in the world to come.—*J. B. Mozley.*

The Law of Retribution.

I. **We see the justice of God—His bounty and severity.**—His bounty in recompensing men above their deserts; His severity in punishing sinners according to their deserts.

II. This doctrine, that we shall drink such as we brew, reap such as we sow, and that men have degrees of felicity or misery answerable to their works, **will make us more careful to avoid sin.**

III. **It serves as a comfort against inequality**; whereas the wicked flourish and the godly live in contempt, the time shall come when every one shall reap even as he has sown.

IV. **It crosses the conceit of those who promise to themselves an impunity from sin and immunity from all the judgments of God**, notwithstanding they go on in their bad practices.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 9. *Against Weariness in Well-doing.*—1. There is the prevailing temper of our nature, the love of ease—horror of hard labour. 2. The reluctance and aversion are greater when the labour is enjoined by extraneous authority—the imperative will of a foreign power. 3. In the service of God there is a good deal that does not seem for ourselves. 4. There is a principle of false humility—what signifies the little I can do? 5. The complaint of deficient co-operation. 6. In the cause of God the object and effect of well-doing are much less palpable than in some other provinces of action. 7. Yet the duty expressly prescribed is an absolute thing, independently of what men can foresee of its results. 8. There is the consciousness and pleasure of pleasing God. 9. What relief has man gained by yielding to the weariness? 10. Our grave accountableness is for making a diligent, patient, persevering use of the means God has actually given us.—*J. Foster.*

Apathy one of our Trials.—1. Because, as in everything else, so in our spiritual growth, we are inevitably disappointed in much of our expectations. 2. The temptation to weariness is no sign at all that the man so tempted is not a true servant of God, though this very often is the first thought that enters the mind. It is no sin to feel weary; the sin is to be weary—that is, to let the feeling have its way and rule our conduct. 3. We expect a kind of fulness of satisfaction in God's service which we do not get nearly so soon as we fancy that we shall. 4. You are quite mistaken in your belief that former prayers and former resolutions have been in vain and have produced no fruit because no fruit is visible. 5. In due season we shall find that it has been worth while to persevere in trying to serve Christ.—*Dr. Temple.*

Well-doing.

I. **Contrasted with fruitless profession.**—It is possible to have a clear notion of Christian truth and to talk well, and yet be idle and useless.

II. **Contrasted with mistaken standards.**—It is easy to do as others are doing; but are *they* doing well? Practice must be guided by holy precepts.

III. **Contrasted with wrong motives.**—Many are careful to do what is literally the right thing, but they do it with base motives. The correct motives are—love (2 Cor. v. 14), gratitude (Ps. cxvi. 12), compassion (2 Cor. v. 11), desire to imitate Christ. All well-doing is humble and self-renouncing.—*The Lay Preacher.*

"*Reap if we faint not.*"—The image is agricultural.

I. **Points of resemblance.**—1. The material harvest is of two kinds—weeds and golden grain. 2. The spiritual harvest is of two kinds—corruption and everlasting life. 3. A combination of agencies. (1) For the material harvest seed, soil, and elements work with the efforts of the farmer. (2) For the spiritual harvest the seed of the word and the power of God must co-operate with man's agency. 4. As to difficulties. (1) The season may be too wet, too dry, or too hot, or an army of insects may attack the growing grain. (2) The foes of the spiritual harvest are the world, the flesh, and the devil.

II. **Points of contrast.**—1. The material harvest is annual, the spiritual eternal. 2. There are seasons so unfavourable that all the efforts of the farmer prove in vain; the spiritual harvest will never fail. 3. The drouth of one year may be made good by next year's abundance, but eternity cannot compensate for what was lost in time.

III. **Encouragements.**—1. "Our labour is not in vain in the Lord." 2. "In due season we shall reap, if we faint not." 3. The harvest will be glorious and eternal.—*Homiletic Monthly.*

Ver. 10. *On doing Good.*

I. **It is our duty to do good.**—This

duty is enforced both by the words and example of Christ. Christianity not only requires its adherents to abstain from evil, but it demands their active service.

II. **In doing good man attains to true nobility of character.**—The characters in history that exert the greatest fascination over us are not those of eminent statesmen or scientists, but those who have been distinguished for their philanthropy. We see in them a moral dignity that is unique. What reversals in human estimates of character will take place when the divine standard of greatness is appealed to!

III. **In doing good we find true happiness.**—God has so constituted us that the exercise of our malevolent passions is productive of inward dissatisfaction, while the exercise of benevolent affections is attended with the greatest joy. There is real luxury in doing good.—*Preacher's Magazine.*

The Opportunity of Beneficence.

I. **What a precious thing is opportunity.**—People talk about making time for this or that purpose. The time is really made for us, only we are too idle or too careless to use it for the proper end. Opportunities of usefulness are of frequent occurrence; they are wont to come and go with rapidity. They must be seized as you would lay hold of a passing friend in the street.

II. **The whole of life is an opportunity.**—There is such a thing as a useful life, a true life, a noble life, though all lives must needs contain a multitude of neglected opportunities. As a series of opportunities its record is woefully imperfect. As one opportunity it is not utterly unworthy of the example of Christ. Let us have a thread of right intention running through life. Let us have an active purpose of benevolence—a constant design of love. The continuous opportunity of life must be utilised, if the particular opportunities of life are to be turned to the best account.

III. **The field of beneficence is very wide.**—Wherever men are found it is possible for us to do them good. We touch only a few persons, but each of these is in contact with others. To do great things with great powers is easy enough; but things so done may be undone so. The glory of Christianity has always been that it does great things with small powers, or powers that men think small; and the results of its work remain. Good work done by many hands is better than the extended philanthropy of an individual; for what is this but the effort of one man to make amends for the neglect of a thousand?

IV. **Though all men have a claim on our Christian benevolence some are entitled to a special share.**—A man does not become a better citizen when he spurns his own family and neglects his duties at home. On the contrary, the noblest philanthropist is the most affectionate of fathers and husbands, and he who loves most widely in the world loves most intensely in his own house. So it will be with us in our Christian charity. We shall begin with those who are called by the common name and worship the common Lord, and from these we shall go on, with our energy not exhausted but rather refreshed, to the great mass of mankind.—*Edward C. Lefroy.*

Doing Good.

I. **We must do good with that only which is our own.**—We may not cut a large and liberal shive off another man's loaf; we may not steal from one to give to another, or deal unjustly with some that we may be merciful to others.

II. **We must do good with cheerfulness and alacrity.**—What more free than gift; therefore we may not play the hucksters in doing good, for that blemishes the excellency of the gift.

III. **We must so do good as that we do not disable ourselves for ever doing good.**—So begin to do good as that we may continue.

IV. **We must do all the good we can within the compass of our calling,** and hinder all the evil.

V. **We must do good to all.**—1. From the grounds of love and beneficence. 2. God is good and bountiful to all. 3. Do good to others as we would they should do to us. 4. Our profession and the reward we look for require us to do this.

VI. **There is no possibility of doing good to others after this life.**—*Perkins.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 11—13.

Apostolic Exposure of False Teachers.

I. **The apostle gives special emphasis to his warning by concluding his epistle in his own handwriting.**—"Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand" (ver. 11). The apostle usually dictated his epistles to an amanuensis, except the concluding salutation, which he wrote himself by way of authentication. At this point of the epistle to the Galatians he appears to have taken the pen from the hand of the amanuensis, and with his own hand written the concluding sentences in clear, bold characters, thus giving the utmost possible emphasis and solemnity to his words. They are a postscript, or epilogue, to the epistle, rehearsing with incisive brevity the burden of all that it was in the apostle's heart to say to these troubled and shaken Galatians. He wishes to reimpress upon his emotional readers the warnings he had already expressed against the false teachers, to assure them of his intense regard for their welfare, and to lay additional stress upon the peril of their hesitating attitude. The more apparent and imminent the danger, the louder and more earnest is the warning expressed.

II. **It is shown that the policy of the false teachers was to avoid the suffering connected with the ignominy of the cross of Christ.**—"They constrain you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ" (ver. 12). The false teachers were really cowards, though this accusation they would be the first indignantly to resent. They wanted to mix up the old faith with the new, to entangle the new Christian converts with Mosaic observances. If they succeeded in persuading the Gentile Christians to be circumcised, they would propitiate the anger of their Israelite kindred, and dispose them to regard the new doctrine more favourably. They would, with heartless recklessness, rob the believer of all his privileges in Christ in order to make a shield for themselves against the enmity of their kinsmen. Cowards at heart, they were more afraid of persecution than eager to know and propagate the truth. If a man will be a Christian, he cannot avoid the cross; and to attempt to avoid it will not release from suffering. It is a craven fear indeed that refuses to espouse the truth because it may bring pain. "No servant of Christ," says Augustine, "is without affliction. If you expect to be free from persecution, you have not yet so much as begun to be a Christian."

III. **The insincerity of the false teachers was apparent in their not keeping the law themselves, but in boasting of the number of their converts to its external observance.**—"For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh" (ver. 13). The Judaists were not only cowardly, but insincere. It was not the glory of the law they were concerned about, but their own success. If they had tried to convert the heathen, however imperfect might be their creed, they would have merited some respect; but, like some religious troublers to-day, they selected for their prey those who were already converted. They practised their wiles on the inexperience of young believers, as they expected to gather from that class the greater number of proselytes of whom to make their boast. "Their policy was dishonourable both in spirit and in aim. They were false to Christ in whom they professed to believe, and to the law which they pretended to

keep. They were facing both ways, studying the safest not the truest course, anxious in truth to be friends at once with the world and Christ. Their conduct has found many imitators, in men who make godliness a way of gain, whose religious course is dictated by considerations of worldly self-interest. Business patronage, professional advancement, a tempting family alliance, the *entrée* into some select and envied circle—such are the things for which creeds are bartered, for which men put their souls and the souls of their children knowingly in peril."

Lessons.—1. *The false teacher may be the occasion of much mischief and spiritual loss.* 2. *He succumbs in the presence of suffering.* 3. *He is more anxious for public success than for the spread of the truth.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 12. *The Odium of the Cross of Christ.*

I. **The history of the cross.**—It is a history of sin on our part, and of suffering on the part of Christ. What a change has been produced in the moral aspect of the universe by the preaching of the cross!

II. **The odium connected with the cross.**—There is odium and suffering connected with the cross still; in some shape we shall suffer persecution for it. If we will lead a holy life, then suffering, persecution, reproach, hatred and ill-will, sarcasm, wit, ridicule, and obloquy will be cast upon us. It was said by one, when several were expelled from one of our universities, that "if some are expelled for having too much religion, it is high time to begin to inquire whether there are not some who have too little." If we speak of the reproach of the cross, what should that reproach be? Not that you have too much religion, but that you have too little, and that many of you have none at all.

III. **As to those who suffer persecution for the cross,** it is the greatest possible honour to be laughed at, mocked, and insulted for the sake of the Saviour. If the spirit of the martyrs influenced us, there would be no shunning of persecution on account of the cross, but suffering would be welcomed with joy. —*The Pulpit.*

Christianity and Persecution.

I. **We should suspect ourselves** that our hearts are not sound, nor our practice sincere, **when all men speak well of us.**

II. We must not be discouraged **though there be never so many that make opposition, or so mighty** that raise persecution against us.

III. That we think it not strange **when we find affliction or meet with persecution.** The gospel and persecution go hand in hand, or follow one another inseparably.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 13. *Empty Boasting—*

I. **When professed teachers do not practise the virtues they enforce on others.**

II. **When zeal for the observance of outward rites disguises the lack of personal godliness.**

III. **When success is sought simply to be able to boast of success.**

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

Glorying in the Cross—

I. **Because of the great truths it reveals.**—"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 14). "The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" is a comprehensive phrase signifying the whole redeeming work of Christ—the salvation effected for the race by His crucifixion and death

upon the cross. The problem how God can forgive sin without any breach in His moral government, or dimming the lustre of His perfections, is solved in the cross. God is great in Sinai. The thunders precede Him, the lightnings attend Him, the earth trembles, the mountains fall in fragments. But there is a greater God than this. On Calvary, nailed to a cross, wounded, thirsting, dying, He cries, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do!" Great is the religion of power, but greater is the religion of love. Great is the religion of implacable justice, but greater is the religion of pardoning mercy. The cross was the master-theme of the apostle's preaching and the chief and exclusive subject of his glorying.

II. **Because of its contrast to effete ceremonialism.**—"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision" (ver. 15). To the Jew circumcision was everything. By the cross Judaism, as a means of salvation, is utterly abolished. Uncircumcision includes all Gentile heathenism. Before the cross all heathen religions must perish. The Gentile cultus was never intended to supplant Jewish customs; both are excluded as unavailing in human salvation. The devotees of form and ceremony are apt to develop into bigotry and pride; the foes of ritualism are in danger of making a religion of their opposition; and both parties indulge in recriminations that are foreign to the spirit of Christianity. "Thus I trample on the pride of Plato," said the cynic, as he trod on the philosopher's sumptuous carpets; and Plato justly retorted, "You do it with greater pride." Ceremonialism is effete, and is not worth contending about. It is nothing; Christ is everything, and the cross the only subject worthy of the Christian's boast.

III. **Because of the moral change it effects.**—"But a new creature"—a new creation (ver. 15). In the place of a dead ceremonialism the gospel plants a new moral creation. It creates a new type of character. The faith of the cross claims to have produced not a new style of ritual, a new system of government, but new men. The Christian is the "new creature" which it begets. The cross has originated a new civilisation, and is a conspicuous symbol in the finest works of art. Ruskin, describing the artistic glories of the Church of St. Mark in Venice, says: "Here are all the successions of crowded imagery showing the passions and pleasures of human life symbolised together, and the mystery of its redemption: for the maze of interwoven lines and changeful pictures lead always at last to the cross, lifted and carved in every place and upon every stone, sometimes with the serpent of eternity wrapped round it, sometimes with doves beneath its arms and sweet herbage growing forth from its feet; but conspicuous most of all on the great rood that crosses the church before the altar, raised in bright blazonry against the shadow of the apse. It is the cross that is first seen and always burning in the centre of the temple, and every dome and hollow of its roof has the figure of Christ in the utmost height of it, raised in power, or returning in judgment." The true power of the cross is not artistic or literary or political, but moral. It is a spiritually transforming force that penetrates and guides every form of human progress.

IV. **Because of personal identification with its triumph over the world.**—"By whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (ver. 14). As the world of feverish pleasure, of legal ordinances, was conquered by the cross, so the faith of the apostle in the crucified One gave him the victory over the world, so that it lost all power to charm or intimidate. The world of evil is doomed, and the power of the cross is working out its ultimate defeat. I have seen a curious photograph of what purports to be a portrait of the Saviour in the days of His flesh, and which by a subtle manipulation of the artist has a double representation. When you first look upon the picture you see the closed eyes of the Sufferer, and the face wears a pained and wearied expression; but as you

gaze intently the closed eyes seem to gently open and beam upon you with the light of loving recognition. So as you gaze upon the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ it seems to you the symbol of suffering and defeat, but as you keep your eyes steadily fixed upon it the cross gradually assumes the glory of a glittering crown, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

Lessons.—1. *The cross is the suggestive summary of saving truth.* 2. *The cross is the potent instrument of the highest moral conquests.* 3. *The cross is the loftiest theme of the believer's glorying.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 14. *Christ Crucified.*

I. By Christ crucified **we have reconciliation with God,** remission of sins, and acceptance to eternal life.

II. **We have the peace of God,** peace with men, with ourselves; with the creatures.

III. **We recover the right and title which we had in creation** to all the creatures and blessings of God.

IV. **All afflictions cease to be curses and punishments,** and become either trials or corrections.

V. **Those who can truly glory in the cross are dead to the world and the world to them.**

VI. We are taught **to carry ourselves in the world as crucified and dead men,** not to love, but to renounce and forsake it.—*Perkins.*

Glorying in the Cross of Christ.

I. **We glory in the doctrine of the cross—the justification of guilty men through a propitiatory sacrifice—because of its antiquity.**—It was taught by patriarchs and prophets, the law of sacrifice was its grand hieroglyphical record, the first sacrifices were its types, the first awakened sinner with his load of guilt fell upon this rock and was supported, and by the sacrifice of Christ shall the last sinner saved be raised to glory.

II. **Because it forms an important part of the revelation of the New Testament.**

III. **As affording the only sure ground of confidence to a penitent sinner.**

IV. **Because of its moral effects.**—Not only in the superstitions and idolatries it has destroyed, the barbarous nations it has civilised, the cruel customs it has abrogated, and the kindly influence it has shed upon the laws and manners of nations; but in its moral effect on individuals, producing the most ardent love to God and kindling benevolence towards all. —*Richard Watson.*

The True Glory of the Christian.

I. **The disposition of mind denoted by the expressions—"The world is crucified unto me; I am crucified to the world."**—1. The nature of it—a total rupture with the world. 2. The gradations of which it admits. Deadness to avarice and pride—in respect of exertion and actual progress—in respect of hope and fervour. 3. The difficulty, the bitterness, of making a sacrifice so painful.

II. **In such a disposition true glory consists.**—Comparison between the hero of this world and the Christian hero. The hero derives his glory from the greatness of the master he serves, from the dignity of the persons who have preceded him in the same honourable career, from the brilliancy of his achievements, from the acclamations his exploits excite. How much more the Christian hero!

III. **The cross of Christ alone can inspire us with these sentiments.**—If we consider it in relation to the atrocious guilt of those who despise it, in relation to the proofs there displayed of Christ's love, in the proofs it supplies of the doctrine of Christ, and in relation to the glory that shall follow.—*Saurin.*

The Cross a Burden or a Glory.

I. **There is the constant, ordinary discipline of human life.**—Life when it is earnest contains more or less of suffering. There is a battle of good and evil, and these special miseries are the bruises of the blows that fill the air, sometimes seeming to fall at random and perplexing our reason, because we cannot rise to such height of vision as to take in the whole field at once.

II. **There is the wretchedness of feeling self-condemned.**—Law alone is a cross. Man needs another cross—not Simon's, but Paul's. He took it up, and it grew light in his hands. He welcomed it, and it glowed with lustre, as if it were framed of the sunbeams of heaven.

III. **The same spiritual contrast, the same principle of difference between compulsory and voluntary service, opens to us two interpretations of the suffering of the Saviour Himself.**—Neither the cross of Simon nor the cross of Paul was both literally and actually the cross of Christ. Its charm was that it was chosen. Its power was that it was free. The cross becomes glorious when the Son of God takes it up; there is goodness enough in Him to exalt it. It was the symbol of that sacrifice where self was for ever crucified for love.—*F. D. Huntington.*

The Cross—

I. **The sinner's refuge.**
II. **The sinner's remedy.**
III. **The sinner's life.**

The Glory of the Cross.

I. **The cross was the emblem of death.**

II. **Christ was not only a dead Saviour, but a condemned Saviour.**

III. **A disgraced Saviour,** because the cross was a disgraceful kind of punishment.

IV. **Paul gloried in the cross because it is an exhibition of the righteousness of God.**

V. **Because it proclaims His love.**

VI. **The contemplation of Christ's cross helps us to conquer the world.**—*Newman Hall.*

Glorying in the Cross.

I. **The subjects in which the apostle gloried.**—1. He might have gloried in his distinguished ancestry. 2. In his polished education. 3. In the morality of his former life. 4. In his extraordinary call to the apostleship. 5. In his high ecclesiastical position. 6. He did not glory in the literal cross. 7. Nor in the metaphorical cross. 8. But in the metonymical cross (1 Cor. i. 17; Col. i. 20).

II. **The characteristics of the apostle's glorying.**—1. His glorying was not merely verbal, but practical. 2. Not sectarian, but Christian and catholic. 3. Not temporary, but permanent.

III. **The reasons of the apostle's glorying.**—1. Here he saw a grander display of the divine character and perfections than elsewhere. 2. This was the scene of the most glorious victory ever witnessed. 3. It was the centre of all God's dispensations. 4. The cross was the most powerful incentive to true morality. 5. Hence flowed all the blessings of the gospel economy. 6. Here was made an atonement equal to the needs of our fallen world.

Lessons.—1. *Let us here see the purity of the moral law and the heinousness of sin.* 2. *Let the sinner come to the cross for pardon, purity, peace, and joy.*—*W. Antliff.*

Glorying in the Cross.

I. **Paul's enthusiasm as expressed in the exclamation of the text.**

II. **One main source of his zeal lay in the subject of his enthusiasm.**—1. The cross is a fit subject for glory as symbolising *an infinite, boundless truth.* 2. Because it is *an eternal fact.* 3. Because it is *the ground of man's justification and the symbol of his redemption.*

III. **Look at the result—crucifixion to the world.**—The true solution of

the Christian's relationship to the world lies in the fact that it is a separation not in space but in spirit.—*J. Hutchison, in "Scottish Pulpit."*

Ver. 15. *Scriptural View of True Religion.*

I. **What true religion is not.**—1. It is not circumcision nor uncircumcision. 2. It is not an outward thing. (1) You are not religious because you have been baptised. (2) Because you are called a Christian, and have been born of Christian parents. (3) Because you frequent the Church, attend the Lord's Supper, and are regular at your devotions.

II. **What true religion is.**—1. It is not an outward but an inward thing. It is not a new name, but a new nature. A *new creation* describes a great change in man. 2. The greatness of this change shows also the power by which it is wrought. Creation is a divine work. 3. The rite of circumcision taught the necessity of the change. Though it was a *seal* of the righteousness of faith, it was also a sign of the inward renewal and purification of the heart. Baptism in the Christian Church teaches the same truth. The texts of Scripture which set forth the evil nature of man set forth the necessity of this great change.—*Edward Cooper.*

The New Creature.—The new creature is the only thing acceptable to God. It is the renovation of the whole man, both in the spirit of our minds and in the affections of our heart. Neither the substance nor the faculties of the soul are lost by the Fall, but only the qualities of the faculties, as when an instrument is out of tune the fault is not in the substance of the instrument, nor in the sound, but in the disproportion or jar in the sound; therefore the qualities only are renewed by grace. These qualities are either in the understanding or the will and affections. The quality in the understanding is knowledge; in the will and affections they are righteousness and holiness, both which are in truth and sincerity. Holiness performs all the duties of piety, righteousness the duties of humanity, truth seasoning both the former with sincerity.—*Ralph Cudworth.*

The Necessity of a New Nature.—The raven perched on the rock where she whets her bloody beak, and with greedy eye watches the death-struggles of an unhappy lamb, cannot tune her croaking voice to the mellow music of a thrush; and since it is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaketh, how could a sinner take up the strain and sing the song of saints?—*Guthrie.*

The New Birth begins our True Life.—A stranger passing through a churchyard saw these words written on a tombstone: "Here lies an old man seven years old." He had been a true Christian only for that length of time.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 16—18.

A Dignified and Touching Farewell—

I. **Supplicates the best blessings on the truly righteous.**—"As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (ver. 16). Jewish discipline and pagan culture are for ever discredited by the new creation of moral virtue. The rule of the renewed inward life supersedes the works of the condemned flesh. On all who seek to regulate their lives according to this rule the apostle invokes the peace and mercy of God. "Peace is followed by the mercy which guards and restores it. Mercy heals backslidings and multiplies pardons. She loves to bind up a broken heart or a rent and distracted Church. For the betrayers of

the cross he has stern indignation and alarms of judgment. Towards his children in the faith nothing but peace and mercy remains in his heart. As an evening calm shuts in a tempestuous day, so this blessing concludes the epistle so full of strife and agitation. We catch in it once more the chime of the old benediction, which through all storm and peril ever rings in ears attuned to its note: "Peace shall be upon Israel" (Ps. cxxv. 5).

II. **Pleads the brand of suffering for loyalty to Christ as conclusive proof of authority.**—"From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (ver. 17). The apostle has sufficiently vindicated his authority by facts and arguments, and he would effectually silence all quibbles on this subject by triumphantly pointing to the marks of suffering on his own body received in his Master's service. These marks he carried wherever he went, like the standard-bearer of an army who proudly wears his scars. No man would have suffered as Paul did unless he was convinced of the importance of the truth he had received and of his supernatural call to declare the same. Suffering is the test of devotion and fidelity. For a picture of the harassed, battered, famished sufferer in the cause of Christ and His gospel read 2 Cor. iv. 8-10, xi. 23-28. Marks of suffering are more eloquent than words. The highest eminence of moral perfection and influence cannot be reached without much suffering. It is a callous nature indeed that is not touched with the sight of suffering heroically endured. The calm bravery of the early Christians under the most fiendish persecution won many a convert to the truth.

III. **Concludes with an affectionate benediction.**—"Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen" (ver. 18). Placing the word "brethren" at the end of the sentence, as in the Greek, suggests that, after much rebuke and admonition, the apostle bids his readers farewell with the warm-hearted expression of brotherhood. Notwithstanding fickleness on their part, his love towards them remains unchanged. He prays that the grace of Christ, the distinctive and comprehensive blessing of the new covenant, may continue to rest upon them and work its renewing and sanctifying power upon their spirit, the place where alone it can accomplish its most signal triumphs. Forgiveness for their defection and confidence in their restoration to the highest Christian privileges and enjoyment, are the last thoughts of the anxious apostle. Between them and moral bankruptcy is the prayerful solicitude of a good man.

Lessons.—1. *When argument is exhausted prayer is the last resource.* 2. *Prayer links divine blessing with human entreaty.* 3. *Last words have about them a solemn and affecting efficacy.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 16. *The True Israel of God*—

I. **Are those who personally enjoy the inward righteousness that comes through faith.**

II. **Who live consistently with their spiritual profession and the truth they have embraced.**

III. **Enjoy the divine benedictions of mercy and peace.**

Ver. 17. *Marks of the Lord Jesus.*

I. **The word-picture here presented.**—1. *The figure*—slave-brands, στίγματα. 2. *The facts*—Paul's historic experiences (1 Cor. iv. 9-15; 2 Cor. xi. 23-30). 3. *The challenge*—"Let no man trouble me."

II. **The suggestion the picture makes.**—1. He who follows the Lord Jesus must expect some will try to trouble him. 2. He whose marks are most conspicuous will be troubled the least. 3. He who has marks may take comfort in knowing how much his Master paid for him. 4. He who is owned may remember that his Master

owns and recognises the marks also. 5. He that has no marks is either a better or a poorer Christian than the apostle Paul. 6. Satan outwits himself when he gives a believer more marks. 7. A sure day is coming when the marks will be honourable, for the body of humiliation will be like the glorious body of Christ.—*Homiletic Monthly.*

Marked Men.

I. **Ill-marked men.**—Think of the marks left on men by sickness, intemperance, impurity, crime, sin of any kind. Evil will always leave its mark.

II. **Well-marked men.**—1. *Christian marks*—the marks of Christ. Paul was the slave of Christ. Some of his marks for Christ were literal, as the *weals* caused by the rods of the Roman Cæsars, the *red lines* caused by scourging in Jewish synagogues, the *scars* caused by repeated stonings. The marks of the Christian are mainly spiritual—marked by trustfulness, gentleness, purity, unselfishness.

2. *Distinct marks.*—Marked that he may be recognised. If you have the marks of Jesus, confess and obey Him.

3. *Deep marks.*—Branded on the body, not lines that can easily be removed, but going down to the flesh. Our Christian life is often feeble because it is not deep.

4. *Personal marks.*—The marks of Jesus of no avail unless you possess them. No man can really trouble you if you bear branded on your body the marks of Jesus.—*Local Preacher's Treasury.*

Suffering for Jesus.

I. The scars of the saints for the maintenance of the truth **are the sufferings, wounds, and marks of Christ Himself**, seeing they are the wounds of the members of that body whereof He is the Head.

II. **They convince the persecutors that they are the servants of Christ who suffer thus for righteousness' sake.**

III. **If men be constant in their profession—in faith and obedience—the marks of their suffering are banners of victory.**—No man ought to be ashamed of them, no more than soldiers of their wounds and scars, but rather in a holy manner to glory of them. Constantine the Great kissed the holes of the eyes of certain bishops who had them put out for their constant profession of the faith of Christ, reverencing the virtue of the Holy Ghost which shined in them. 1. By suffering bodily afflictions we are made conformable to Christ. 2. They teach us to have sympathy with the miseries of our brethren. 3. Our patient enduring of affliction is an example to others and a means of confirming them in the truth. 4. They serve to scour us from the rust of sin.—*Perkins.*

Ver. 18. *Concluding Benediction.*

I. **The apostle invokes the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**—1. Because He is the fountain of it. 2. Because He is the conduit or pipe by which it is conveyed to us.

II. **Christ is called our Lord**—1. By right of creation. 2. Of inheritance. 3. Of redemption. 4. Of conquest. 5. Of contract and marriage.

III. **Observe the emphasis with which the apostle concludes the epistle.**—1. Opposing Christ, the Lord of the house, to Moses, who was but a servant. 2. The grace of Christ to inherent justice and merit of works. 3. The spirit in which he would have grace to be seated, to the flesh in which the false teachers gloried so much. 4. Brotherly unity one with another—implied in the word "brethren"—to the proud and lordly carriage of the false teachers.—*Ibid.*

THE

EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

Readers to whom the epistle was sent.—In the two most ancient copies of the Scriptures which we possess—dating from the fourth century of our era—the words in our A.V. (i. 1), "*at Ephesus*," are missing; and Basil the Great, who lived in the fourth century, says he had seen copies which, "ancient" even at that early date, spoke of the readers as "*those who are, and the faithful in Christ Jesus.*" When it is observed, however, that Basil still says in that passage the apostle is "*writing to the Ephesians*," in all honesty we must admit another interpretation of his words to be possible.

Add to these early witnesses that Ephesus is not named in the text the further fact that, though St. Paul had lived and laboured between two and three years in Ephesus, there is absolutely no mention of any name of those with whom he had been associated, and what on the assumption of the Ephesian destination of the epistle is stranger still, no reference to the work, unless we may be allowed to regard the "sealing with the Holy Spirit of promise" as a reminiscence of Acts xix. 1-7.

We must not make too much, however, of this absence of personal greetings. Tychicus can do, *vivâ voce*, all that needs to be done in that way. St. Paul had been "received as an angel of God, or even as Christ Jesus," by Galatians, not one of whom is mentioned in the letter sent to the Galatians.

Certain expressions in the body of the letter are strange if the Ephesian Christians were the first readers of it. In i. 15 the apostle says, "After I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus." One asks, "Did not the faith which 'cometh by hearing' result from Paul's preaching in Ephesus? Then how can he speak of hearing of it?" It may be answered, "Does not Paul say to Philemon, 'Thou owest unto me thine own self' (ver. 19), and yet says (ver. 5) that, *hearing* of his love and faith, he thanks God?" Moreover, has any one quite demonstrated the impossibility of this faith being the continuity of that which began with the abjuration of magic in a costly offering of fifty thousand pieces of silver?

(Acts xix. 17-20). "Faith" may take the form of fidelity as easily as of credence.

Again, in iii. 2 Paul, at the word "Gentiles," enters into a digression about his specific commission as their apostle. Just as to the Galatian Church he expatiates on the special grace bestowed by God and recognised by the "pillars" of the Church, so here he magnifies his office, and his words here no more prove that he had never seen his readers than the section of Galatians (ii. 6-9) proves that he did not know the Galatians. Even supposing they did, it surely would not be an astonishing thing that in the ever-shifting population of a seaport many may have joined the Church since St. Paul was in Ephesus. That this was the place to which St. Paul sent his messenger with the letter before us cannot be demonstratively shown; but we feel something like conviction by considering: (*a*) That the preponderant evidence of the MSS. says "Ephesus"; (*b*) that the versions are unanimous as an echo of the MSS.; (*c*) that the entire ancient Church has spoken of the epistle as "to the Ephesians," Marcion's voice being the only exception; (*d*) the improbability of St. Paul writing "*to the saints which are*" without adding the name of some place; (*e*) "Ephesus" more easily meets internal difficulties than any other place. This, in substance, is Bishop Ellicott's view. Still, we cannot regard it as impossible that "Ephesus" may comprise many Churches in the vicinity, and therefore regard the letter as really encyclical, even though it were proved that St. Paul wrote "to the saints at Ephesus."

Analysis of the epistle.

i. 1, 2. Salutation. Joy and well-being to those in Christ.
3—14. Hymn of praise to the Father, who worked out in Christ His pre-temporal designs of beneficence, and gave pledge of the yet more glorious consummation of His divine will in the bestowal of the Holy Ghost.
15—23. Thanksgiving of the apostle over their fidelity, and his prayer for their complete illumination in the incorporation of the Gentiles in the mystical body of Christ, "the Head."

ii. 1—10. The power that delivered Christ from bodily corruption in the tomb saved His members out of the corruption of fleshly lusts, thus silencing every human boast and magnifying the divine grace.
11—22. Wholesome reminder of their former distance from Christ as contrasted with present union with Him, and union with the Jews in Him, being led to the Father with them.

iii. 1—13. Paul's familiar statement of the origin of his apostolate as specially commissioned—"ambassador extraordinary" to the Gentiles.
14—19. Prayer that by "power and faith and love" they may grasp "the mystery," and become brimful of love divine.
20, 21. Doxology to the doctrinal half of the epistle.

iv. 1—16. Exhortation to a practical observation of this doctrinal unity by the thought that every member of Christ is necessary in its full development to the perfection of the body of which Christ is the Head.
17—24. Casting off the old and putting on the new man.
25—v. 21. Exhortation to conduct in harmony with the new nature.

v. 22—vi. 9. Relative duties of wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters.

vi. 10—18. The Christian panoply.
19, 20. Apostle's request for prayers.
21, 22. *Personalia.*
23, 24. A twin doxology, reversing the order of the salutation—"Peace and grace."

Genuineness of the epistle.—Dr. Ellicott sums up the matter briefly by saying, "There is no just ground on which to dispute the genuineness." Arguments based on certain expressions in the body of the letter have been speciously urged against its genuineness by De Wette and others; and Holzmann has "learnedly maintained that the epistle is only the expansion of a short letter to the Colossians by some writer about the close of the first century" (*Godet*).

"We have, on the one hand, subjective arguments, not unmixed with arrogance, but devoid of sound historical basis; on the other hand, unusually convincing counter-investigations and the unvarying testimony of the ancient Church." Adverse arguments have been answered so satisfactorily and sometimes so crushingly as to leave no room for doubt. Those who cannot read the epistle without being moved by the peculiar loftiness, by the grandeur of conception, by the profound insight, by the eucharistic inspiration they recognise in it, will require strong evidence to persuade them that it was written by some other man who wished it to pass as St. Paul's.

The practical design of the epistle.—The object is to set forth the ground, course, aim, and end of the Church of the faithful in Christ. The Ephesians are a sample of the Church universal. The key to the epistle may be found in the opening sentence (ver. 3). Fixing his eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle opens his mind to the blessings which radiate forth from Him, and from the Father through Him, upon the whole world. The mind of God towards men unveiled in Christ, the relation of men towards God exhibited in Christ, the present spiritual connection of men with Christ, the hopes of which Christ is the ground and assurance, the laws imposed by the life of Christ upon human life—these are the blessings for which he gives thanks. Christ embracing humanity in Himself is the subject of the epistle. St. Paul tells with strict faithfulness what he has read and seen in Christ; Christ fills the whole sphere of his mind.

CHAPTER I.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **To the saints.**—Dismiss the commonly accepted meaning. Not men who by hard and rigorous methods have reached the heights where but few abide, but those who, as the elect of God, are separated from everything unholy and kept for God's peculiar possession (1 Pet. ii. 9). **And faithful.**—Sometimes the word may mean "believers," sometimes "trustworthy." "The use of the adjective for the Christian brotherhood cannot be assigned rigidly either to the one meaning or the other. Its very comprehensiveness was in itself a valuable lesson" (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 2. **Grace . . . and peace.**—The light-hearted Greek salutation was, "Rejoice"; the more sober Hebrew—our Lord's own—was, "Peace be to you." Here both unite.

Ver. 3. **Blessed be the God and Father.**—The Hebrew form for "hallowing the Name" was, "The Holy One, blessed be He." The Prayer Book version of Psalm c. gives, "Speak good of His name." **Who blessed us.**—When old Isaac pronounces the blessing uttered on Jacob unwittingly to be irreversible, he depends on God for the carrying out of his dying blessing: the divine blessing *makes* whilst *pronouncing* blest. **In the heavenly places.**—Lit. "in the heavenlies"—so, as A.V. margin says, either places or *things*. Perhaps the *local* signification is best; "relating to heaven, and meant to draw us thither" (*Blomfield*).

Ver. 4. **Even as He chose us in Him.**—Whatever be the manifestation of the divine goodness, it is "*in Christ*" that it is made. "This sentence traces back the state of grace and Christian piety to the eternal and independent electing love of God" (*Cremer*). There is always the connotation of some not chosen. **Before the foundation of the world.**—St. Paul, like Esaias, "is very bold." His Master had only said "from," not "before," the foundation (Matt. xxv. 34), reserving the "before" for the dim eternity in which He was the sharer, with the eternal Spirit, of the Father's love (John xvii. 24). **Without blemish** (R.V.), or, in one word, "immaculate." A sacrificial term generally; used by St. Peter (1 Pet. i. 19) to describe that "Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." This word serves to guard "holy," just before it; a separated (holy) people must also be a spotless people.

Ver. 5. **Having predestinated us.**—By pointing as the R.V. margin does, we get Love divine as the basis on which our foreordination rests. "There is no respect of persons with God," and no *arrière pensée* in the invitation, "All that labour and are heavy laden." **Unto adoption as sons.**—The end, as regards man. Perhaps St. John's word goes more deeply into the heart of the mystery, "That we should be called the *children* of God"—"*born* of God." **Through Jesus Christ.**—Mediator of this and every implied blessing. **According to the good pleasure of His will.**—The word for "good pleasure" characterises the will as one whose intent is something good; the unhampered working of the will lies in the expression too. The measure of human privilege in the adoption is *according to* the divine Graciousness.

Ver. 6. **To the praise of the glory of His grace.**—The ultimate end, "that God may be all in all." **Wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.**—The change in the R.V., considerable as it seems, turns on the rendering of one word, the meaning in the New Testament being "to bestow favour." Compare Luke i. 28 and the A.V. marginal alternative "much-graced." Chrysostom's beautiful interpretation must not be lightly rejected, "to make love-worthy"—just as if one were to make a sick or famished man into a beautiful youth, so has God made our soul beautiful and love-worthy for the angels and all saints and for Himself.

Ver. 7. **In whom we have redemption.**—Release in consideration of a ransom paid—"deliverance effected through the death of Christ from the retributive wrath of a holy God and the merited penalty of sin" (*Grimm*). **Through His blood.**—St. Paul quite agrees with the author of Hebrews (ix. 22) that, apart from the pouring out of blood, the putting away of sin cannot be brought about. **The forgiveness of our trespasses.**—Another way of stating in what the redemption consists. Notice the "forgiveness" as compared with the "passing over" (Rom. iii. 25, R.V.). The one is the remission of punishment; the other the omission

to punish sin that has been observed, "leaving it open in the future either entirely to *remit* or else adequately to punish them as may seem good to Him" (*Trench*).

Ver. 8. **In all wisdom and prudence.**—"Wisdom embraces the collective activity of the mind as directed to divine aims to be achieved by moral means. Prudence is the insight of practical reason regulating the dispositions" (*Meyer*).

Ver. 9. **The mystery of His will.**—"Mystery" is here to be taken not so much as a thing which baffles the intellect as the slow utterance of a long-kept secret, which "the fulness of time" brings to birth.

Ver. 10. **The fulness of times.**—The word for "times" denotes "time as brings forth its several births." It is the "flood" in the "tide of affairs." **To sum up all things.**—"To bring together again for Himself all things and all beings (hitherto disunited by sin) into one combined state of fellowship in Christ, the universal bond" (*Grimm*). "It is the mystery of God's will to gather all together for Himself in Christ, to bring all to a unity, to put an end to the world's discord wrought by sin, and to re-establish the original state of mutual dependence in fellowship with God" (*Cremer*). **The things which are in heaven and which are on earth.**

> "The blood that did for us atone
> Conferred on them some gift unknown."

Ver. 11. **In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.**—R.V. "*were made a heritage.*" "The Lord's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance," sang dying Moses. The verbal paradox between A.V. and R.V. is reconciled in fact. "All are yours, and ye are Christ's" (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23). "Before the *Parousia* an ideal possession, thereafter a real one" (*Meyer*). **After the counsel of His own will.**—"The 'counsel' preceding the resolve, the 'will' urging on to action" (*Cremer*).

Ver. 12. **That we should be to the praise.**—R.V. "*to the end that we should be.*" "*Causa finalis* of the predestination to the Messianic lot" (*Meyer*). "We" in antithesis to "you" in ver. 13—We Jewish—you Gentile Christians.

Ver. 13. **In whom ye also, etc.**—The word "trusted," supplied by A.V., is dropped by R.V. It seems best to regard the words after "ye also" as one of the frequent breaks in the flow of the apostle's language, the second "ye" taking up the first. "In whom ye were sealed." "The order of conversion was: hearing, faith, baptism, reception of the Spirit" (*Meyer*). **Ye were sealed.**—"This sealing is the indubitable guarantee of the future Messianic salvation received in one's own consciousness" (*Meyer*).

Ver. 14. **Who is the earnest.**—The guarantee. The word represented by "earnest" was derived from the Phœnician merchants, and meant money which in purchases is given as a pledge that the full amount will be subsequently paid (*Grimm*). The word is found in the Hebrew of Gen. xxxviii. 17, 18, and means "pledge." F. W. Robertson makes a distinction between "pledge" and "earnest"—the grapes of Eshcol were an "earnest" of Canaan. He who receives the Holy Spirit partakes the powers of the age to come (Heb. vi. 4, 5). **Until the redemption.**—The final consummation of the redemption effected by the atonement of Christ. The "until" is faulty, the "earnest" being "something towards" the redemption. **Of the purchased possession.**—R.V. "of God's own possession." "The whole body of Christians, the true people of God acquired by God as His property by means of the redeeming work of Christ" (*Meyer*).

Vers. 15, 16.—St. Paul is always ready to give a prompt acknowledgment of all that is best in his readers and to pray for something better. **Cease not to give thanks.**—My thanksgiving knows no end.

Ver. 17. **That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.**—The connection or unity of the Father and the Son is the basis of the plea for those who are in the Son. Christ said, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, to My God and your God" (John xx. 17). **The Father of glory.**—Compare the phrases, "the Father of mercies" (2 Cor. i. 3), "the Father of lights" (Jas. i. 17), "our Lord Jesus Christ, the glory" (Jas. ii. 1). **The spirit of wisdom and revelation.**—The wisdom which is from above is the heritage of all the redeemed in Christ (1 John iv. 20); but this day-spring, which gladdens the eyes of the heart, grows to mid-day splendour by successive apocalypses. **In the knowledge.**—The word means a complete knowledge. It is a word characteristic of the four epistles of the first Roman captivity.

Vers. 18, 19. **The eyes of your understanding being enlightened . . . to us-ward who believe.**—Three pictures for heaven-illumined eyes: 1. **The hope of His calling.**—Meyer says "the hope" is not here (nor anywhere) the *res sperata*, "the object on which hope fastens, but the great and glorious hope which God gives"—a statement too sweeping for other scholars, though *here* they agree that it is the *faculty* of hope "which encourages and animates." 2. **The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.**—"What a copious and grand accumulation, mirroring, as it were, the weightiness of the thing itself!" (*Meyer*). "Riches of the glory" must not be watered down into "glorious riches." 3. **The exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward.**—The amazing and wholly unexpected working of

the same Hand that wrought our first deliverance: the Power that smites the oppressor with dismay opens the path through the sea (see Isa. xl. 10, 11). **According to the working of His mighty power.**—This may be regarded as a specimen of the divine power, the norm or standard by which we may gain an idea of the "exceeding greatness" of it—that from the tomb of His humiliation Christ was raised by that power to an unrivalled dignity in God's throne. The R.V. gives "*working of the strength of His might*": "*working*"—"the active exertion of power" (*Meyer*); "*strength*"—might *expressing itself* in overcoming resistance, ruling, etc.; "*might*"—*strength in itself* as inward power.

Ver. 20. **Set Him at His own right hand.**—"Dexter Dei ubique est." We cannot dogmatise about the relations to space which a glorified body holds. The transcendent glory of God in that body links God to man, the humanity in the glory gives man his claim in God. "The true commentary on the phrase is Mark xvi. 19, 'He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God'" (*Meyer*).

Ver. 21. **Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.**—R.V. "Rule, and authority, and power, and dominion." "To be understood of the *good* angels, since the apostle is not speaking of the victory of Christ over opposing powers, but of His exaltation above the existing powers of heaven" (*Meyer*). "Powers and dominions, deities of heaven," as Milton calls them, ranged here, perhaps, in a descending order. **And every name that is named.**—"God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." "Let any name be uttered, whatever it is, Christ is above it, is more exalted than that which the name affirms" (*Meyer*). **Not only in this world.**—"This age." "No other name under heaven given among men." **But also in that which is to come.**—There Zechariah's word will have its fullest application. "The Lord shall be King over all the earth; *there shall be one Lord, and His name one.*"

Ver. 22. **And hath put all things under His feet.**—Compare 1 Cor. xv. 27.

> "Strong Son of God, immortal Love, . . .
> Thou madest Death; and lo Thy foot
> Is on the skull which Thou hast made."
>
> *In Memoriam.*

Ver. 23. **The fulness of Him that filleth all in all.**—"The Church, viz., is *the Christ-filled, i.e.* that which is filled by Him in so far as Christ penetrates the whole body and produces Christian life" (*Meyer*). "The brimmed receptacle of Him who filleth all things with all things" (*Farrar*). "Among the Gnostics the supersensible world is called the Pleroma, the fulness *or filled*, in opposition to 'the empty,' the world of the senses" (*Meyer*).

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

Apostolic Salutation.

I. **He declares the divine source of his authority.**—"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God" (ver. 1). The faithful ambassador scans his commission with the utmost care, and is solicitous to clearly understand the will of his Sovereign. If he examines his own fitness for the office, it is only to be humbled under a sense of unworthiness, and to express surprise that he should be chosen to such a dignity and be entrusted with such powers. His supreme ambition is to sink his own personal predilections in the earnest discharge of his duty. Paul does not dilate on his own mental capabilities or spiritual endowments. He accepts his appointment to the apostleship as coming directly from the hand of God, and recognises the divine will as the source of righteousness and of all power to do good. This lofty conception of his call gave him unfaltering confidence in the truth he had to declare, inspired him with an ever-glowing zeal, rendered him immovable in the midst of defection and opposition, and willing to obliterate himself, so that the gospel committed to him might be triumphant. The true minister, in the onerous task of dealing with human doubt and sin, feels the need of all the strength and prestige conferred by the conscious possession of divine authority. He seeks not to advance his own interests or impose his own theories, but to interpret the mind of God to man and persuade to submission and obedience. The power that makes for righteousness has its root in the divine will.

II. **He designates the sacred character of those he salutes.**—"To the saints

which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus" (ver. 1). The Ephesian saints were made so by their faith in Christ Jesus. They were not saints because Paul called them so. Sanctity is not the result of human volition, nor can it be created by a college of cardinals. "Many saints have been canonised who ought to have been cannonaded." Sanctity is the gift of God, and is bestowed on those who believe in Christ Jesus and maintain their allegiance by continued faith in him. They are holy so long as they are faithful. The saints of God! "Think," says Farrar, "of the long line of heroes of faith in the olden times: of the patriarchs—Enoch the blameless, Noah the faithful, Abraham the friend of God; of the sweet and meditative Isaac, the afflicted and wrestling Jacob; of Moses, the meekest of men; of brave judges, glorious prophets, patriotic warriors, toiling apostles; of the many martyrs who would rather die than lie; of the hermits who fled from the guilt and turmoil of life into the solitude of the wilderness; of the missionaries—St. Paul, Columban, Benedict, Boniface, Francis Xavier, Schwartz, Eliot, Henry Martyn, Coleridge, Patteson; of the reformers who cleared the world of lies, like Savonarola, Huss, Luther, Zwingli, Wesley, Whitefield; of wise rulers, like Alfred, Louis, Washington, and Garfield; of the writers of holy books, like Thomas-à-Kempis, Baxter, Bunyan, Samuel Rutherford, Jeremy Taylor; of the slayers of monstrous abuses, like Howard and Wilberforce; of good bishops, like Hugo of Avalon, Fénélon, and Berkeley; of good pastors, like Oberlin, Fletcher of Madeley, Adolphe Monod, and Felix Neff; of all true poets, whether sweet and holy, like George Herbert, Cowper, Keble, and Longfellow, or grand and mighty, like Dante and Milton. These are but few of the many who have reflected the glory of their Master Christ, and who walk with Him in white robes, for they are worthy."

III. **He supplicates the bestowal of the highest blessings.**—"Grace be to you, and peace" (ver. 2). Grace and peace have a divine source. *Grace* is the rich outflow of God's goodness, made available for man through the redeeming work of Christ. There is sometimes the thought that grace implies God's passing by sin. But no, quite the contrary; grace supposes sin to be so horribly bad a thing that God cannot tolerate it. Were it in the power of man, after being unrighteous and evil, to patch up his ways and mend himself so as to stand before God, there would then be no need of grace. The very fact of the Lord's being gracious shows sin to be so evil a thing that man, being a sinner, is utterly ruined and hopeless, and nothing but free grace can meet his case. This grace God is continually supplying. Grace, like manna, will rot if kept overnight. "Wind up thy soul," says George Herbert, "as thou dost thy watch at night." Leave no arrears from day to day. Give us this day's food; forgive us this day's sins. *Peace* is first peace with God, with whom the soul was at enmity; then peace of conscience, troubled on account of repeated sins, and peace with all men. All our best wishes for the welfare of others are included in the all-comprehensive blessings of grace and peace.

Lessons.—1. *The will of God is the highest authority for Christian service.* 2. *The saintly character is the outgrowth of a practical faith.* 3. *Grace and peace describe the rich heritage of the believer.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1, 2. *Paul's Introduction to the Epistle.*—The design of this epistle is more fully to instruct the Ephesians in the nature of that gospel they had received, to guard them against certain errors to which they were exposed from the influence and example of unbelieving Jews and Gentiles, and to inculcate upon them the importance of a conversation becoming their faith and profession. It contains the substance of the gospel.

I. Paul here calls himself an apostle of Jesus Christ.—The word "apostle" signifies a messenger sent on some particular business. Jesus Christ is called an Apostle because He was sent of God to instruct and redeem mankind. Paul and others are called apostles because they were sent of Christ to teach the doctrines they had received from Him. To confirm this commission, as well as to give their ministry success, Christ, according to His promise, wrought with them and established their words with signs following.

1. *Paul was an apostle by the will of God.*—He received not his call or commission from man; nor was he, as Matthias was, chosen to his apostleship by men; but he was called by Jesus Christ, who in person appeared to him for this end that He might send him among the Gentiles, and by God the Father, who revealed His Son in him, and chose him that he should know His will and be a witness of the truth unto all men.

2. *He was called of God by revelation.*—It was not a secret revelation known only to himself, like the revelation on which enthusiasts and impostors ground their pretensions, but a revelation made in the most open and public manner, attended with a voice from heaven and a light which outshone the sun at noonday, and exhibited in the midst of a number of people to whom he could appeal as witnesses of the extraordinary scene. The great business of Paul and the other apostles was to diffuse the knowledge of the gospel and plant Churches in various parts of the world.

II. Paul directs this epistle to the saints and faithful.—The phrases denote they had been called out of the world and separated from others that they might be a peculiar people unto God. The religion we profess contains the highest motives to purity of heart and life. If, content with a verbal profession of and external compliance with this religion, we regard iniquity in our hearts, we are guilty of the vilest prevarication, and our religion, instead of saving us, will but plunge us the deeper into infamy and misery. That which is the visible ought to be the real character of Christians.

III. The apostle expresses his fervent desire that these Ephesians may receive the glorious blessings offered in the gospel.—1. *Grace.* Pardon is grace, for it is the remission of a deserved punishment. Eternal life is grace, for it is a happiness of which we are utterly unworthy. The influences of the divine Spirit are grace, for they are first granted without any good disposition on our part to invite them, they are continued even after repeated oppositions, they prepare us for that world of glory for which we never should qualify ourselves.

2. *Peace.*—By this we understand that peace of mind which arises from a persuasion of our interest in the favour of God. Our peace with God is immediately connected with our faith in Christ. Our peace of mind is connected with our knowledge of the sincerity of our faith. "If our heart condemn us not, we have confidence toward God." The way to enjoy peace is to increase in all holy dispositions and to abound in every good work. If the apostle wished grace and peace to Christians, surely they should feel some solicitude to enjoy them.—*J. Lathrop, D.D.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 3—14.

Praise for the Work of the Trinity in the Gospel of Grace.

These verses are an outburst of descriptive eloquence that even the ample resources of the Greek language seem too meagre to adequately express. The grandeur and variety of ideas, and the necessary vagueness of the phrases by which those ideas are conveyed in this paragraph, create a difficulty in putting the subject into a practical homiletic form. It may help us if we regard the

passage as an outpouring of praise for the work of the Trinity in the gospel of grace, the part of each person in the Trinity being distinctly recognised as contributing to the unity of the whole.

I. **The gospel of grace originated in the love of the Father.**—1. *He hath chosen us to holiness.* "Blessed be the God and Father . . . who hath chosen us . . . that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (vers. 3, 4). The love of God the Father gave Christ to the world, and in Him the human race is dowered with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places." The blessings from heaven link us to heaven, and will by-and-by bring us to heaven, where those blessings will be enjoyed in unrestricted fulness. Before time began, in the free play of His infinite love, God the Father, foreseeing the sin and misery that would come to pass, resolved to save man, and to save him in His own way and for His own purpose. Man was to be saved in Christ, and by believingly receiving Christ; and his salvation was not to free him from moral obligation, but to plant in Him principles of holiness by which he could live a blameless life before God. He chose us for Himself that we might love Him, and find our satisfaction in the perpetual discovery of His great love to us. The true progression of the Christian life is a growth of the ever-widening knowledge of the love of God. Love is the essence and the crown of holiness.

2. *He hath ordained us to sonship.*—"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Christ Jesus Himself" (ver. 5). The sonship is not by natural right of inheritance, but by adoption. It is an act of divine grace, undeserved and unexpected. It is said that, after the battle of Austerlitz, Napoleon adopted the children of the soldiers who had fallen. They were supported and educated by the State, and, as belonging to the family of the emperor, were allowed to attach the name of Napoleon to their own. This was not the adoption of love, but as a recognition of service rendered by their fathers. None can adopt into the family of God but God Himself, and it is an act on His part of pure, unmerited love. He raises us to the highest dignity, and endows us with unspeakable privileges, when He makes us His children; and our lives should be in harmony with so distinguished a relationship.

3. *He hath accepted us in Christ.*—"Wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (ver. 6). Christ, the beloved One, is the special object of the Father's love, and all who are united to Christ by faith become sharers in the love with which the divine Father regards His Son. It is only in and through Christ that we are admitted into the divine family. God loves us in Christ, and the more so because we love Christ. We are accepted to a life of holiness and a service of love. Christ is the pattern of our sonship and the means of our adoption. The love of God to the race finds an outlet through the person and gracious intervention of His Son.

II. **The gospel of grace was wrought out by the sufferings of the Son.**—1. *In Him we have forgiveness of sins.* "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (ver. 7). How little do we realise the greatness and blessedness of the pardon of sin! It may seem difficult to explain how the forgiveness of sins is connected with the sufferings and death of Christ; but there is no fact in the New Testament writings more clearly revealed or more emphatically repeated than this. "The death of Christ was an act of submission on behalf of mankind to the justice of the penalties of violating the eternal law of righteousness—an act in which our own submission not only received a transcendent expression, but was really and vitally included; it was an act which secured the destruction of sin in all who, through faith, are restored to union with Christ; it was an act in which there was a revelation of the righteousness of God which must otherwise have been revealed in the infliction of the penalty of sin on the human race. Instead of inflicting suffering

God has elected to endure it, that those who repent of sin may receive forgiveness, and may inherit eternal glory. It was greater to endure suffering than to inflict it" (*Dale*). The forgiveness is free, full, and complete.

2. *In Him we have the revelation of the mystery of the divine will.*—"Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known to us the mystery of His will" (vers. 8, 9). The will of God is to advance the ultimate glorious destiny of the whole creation. This sublime purpose was for ages an unrevealed mystery, unknown to the prophets, psalmists, and saints of earlier times. In the depths of the divine counsels this purpose was to be carried out by Christ, and it is revealed only through and in Him. The believer in Christ discovers in Him, not only his own blessedness, but also the ultimate glory of all who are savingly united to the great Redeemer. The abounding grace of God bestows wisdom to apprehend a larger knowledge of the ways and will of God, and prudence to practically apply that knowledge in the conduct of life.

3. *In Him we enjoy the unity and grandeur of the heavenly inheritance.*—"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, . . . in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, . . . that we should be to the praise of His glory" (vers. 10-12). The fulness of times must refer to the gospel age and the glorious ages to follow, in which the accomplishment of the divine purpose will become more apparent. That purpose is to heal up the estrangement of man from God, and to restore moral harmony to the universe, which has been disordered by the introduction of sin. The great agent in the unifying and harmonising of all things is Christ, who is the centre and circumference of all. The angels who never sinned, and the saints who are made such by redeeming mercy, will share together the inheritance of bliss provided by the suffering and triumphant Christ. "Our final glory will consist, not in the restoration of the solitary soul to solitary communion with God, but in the fellowship of all the blessed with the blessedness of the universe as well as with the blessedness of God."

III. **The gospel of grace is confirmed and realised by the operation of the Holy Spirit.**—1. *By Him we hear and understand the word of truth.* "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (ver. 13). The gospel is emphatically the word of truth; it is reliable history, not romance—a revelation of truths essential to salvation. It is the function of the Holy Spirit to illuminate the mind by the instrumentality of the truth, to apply the word to the conscience, and to regenerate the heart. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us, and the vision leads on to a spiritual transformation.

2. *By Him we are sealed as an earnest of possessing the full inheritance of blessing.*—"Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance" (vers. 13, 14). The work of the Spirit broke down all class distinctions. The Jewish Christians discovered that the exclusive privileges of their race had passed away. All believers in Christ Jesus, whether Jew or Gentile, received the assurance of the Spirit that all the prerogatives and blessings of God's eternal kingdom were theirs. The seal of the Spirit is the divine attestation to the believing soul of its admission into the favour of God, and the guarantee of ultimately entering into the full possession and enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance.

Lessons.—1. *The gospel of grace is the harmonious work of the blessed Trinity.* 2. *The grace of the gospel is realised by faith.* 3. *Praise for the gift of the gospel should be continually offered to the Triune God.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 3-6. *The Doctrine of Predestination.*—Neither Calvinism nor Arminianism has solved the problem presented in this chapter. Like difficulties meet us in God's providential dealings—ay, in the workings of His natural laws; for, as a brilliant author has said, "Nature is a terrible Calvinist."—*Lange.*

Election.—It is above logic and philosophy and even technical theology, even as on many, and these, the most important subjects, the heart is a better teacher than the head. In these matters I am so fearful that I dare not speak further—yea, almost none otherwise than the text does, as it were, lead me by the hand.—*Ridley.*

Mystery of election.—Those who are willing are always the elect; those who will not are not elected. Many men are wrapped up in the doctrines of election and predestination; but that is the height of impertinence. They are truths belonging to God alone; and if you are perplexed by them, it is only because you trouble yourself about things which do not concern you. You only need to know that God sustains you with all His might in the winning of your salvation, if you will only rightly use His help. Whoever doubts this is like a crew of a boat working with all their might against the tide and yet going back hour after hour; then they notice that the tide turns, while at the same time the wind springs up and fills their sails. The coxswain cries, "Pull away, boys! wind and tide favour you!" But they answer, "What can we do with the oars? don't the wind and tide take away our free agency?"—*H. W. Beecher.*

Ver. 3. *Spiritual Blessings.*

I. **They are accommodated to our spiritual wants and desires, they come down from heaven, prepare us for heaven, and will be completed in our admission to heaven.**—The influences of the Spirit are heavenly gifts, the renovation of the heart by a divine operation is wisdom from above, the renewed Christian is born from above and becomes a spiritual man, the state of immortality Christ has purchased for believers is an inheritance reserved for them in heaven, in the resurrection they will be clothed with a house from heaven, with spiritual and heavenly bodies, and they will sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

II. **The blessings granted to the Ephesians are tendered to us.**—He offers us the honours and felicities of adoption and the remission of all our sins through the atonement of His Son. He has proposed for our acceptance an inheritance incorruptible in the heavens. We have happier advantages to become acquainted with the doctrines and precepts of the gospel than the primitive Christians could enjoy. If they were bound to give thanks for their privileges, how criminal must be ingratitude under ours! We must one day answer before God for all the spiritual blessings He has sent us.—*Lathrop.*

Vers. 4-6. *The Nature, Source, and Purpose of Spiritual Blessings.*

I. **God chose and predestinated these Ephesian Christians before the foundation of the world.**—We must not so conceive of God's election and the influence of His grace as to set aside our free agency and final accountableness; nor must we so explain away God's sovereignty and grace as to exalt man to a state of independence. Now, so far as the grace of God in the salvation of sinners is absolute and unconditional, election or predestination is so, and no farther. If we consider election as it respects the final bestowment of salvation, it is plainly conditional. To imagine that God chooses some to eternal life without regard to their faith and holiness is to suppose that some are saved without these qualifications or saved contrary to His purpose.

God hath chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.

II. **Consider the spiritual qualifications to which the Ephesians were chosen.**—"To be holy and without blame before Him in love" (ver. 4). Holiness consists in the conformity of the soul to the divine nature and will, and is opposed to all moral evil. Love is a most essential part of the character of the saint. Charity out of a pure heart is the end of the commandment. Without charity all our pretensions to gospel holiness are vain.

III. **Consider the adoption to which believers are predestinated** (ver. 5).—Our sonship is not our native right, but the effect of God's gracious adoption. 1. *It implies a state of freedom in opposition to bondage.* Believers are free as being delivered from the bondage of sin, and as having near access to God and intimate communion with Him. Children are usually admitted to that familiar intercourse which is denied to servants. 2. *Adoption brings us under the peculiar care of God's providence.* 3. *Includes a title to a glorious resurrection from the dead and to an eternal inheritance in the heavens.* If believers are the children of God, then their temper must be a childlike temper, a temper corresponding to their relation, condition, and character.

IV. **That all spiritual blessings are derived to us through Christ** (vers. 5, 6).

V. **The reason of God's choosing believers in Christ and predestinating them to adoption is the good pleasure of His will** (ver. 5).—If we admit we are sinful, fallen creatures, unworthy of God's favour and insufficient for our own redemption, then our salvation must ultimately be resolved into God's good pleasure. There is no other source from which it can be derived. If death is our desert, our deliverance must be by grace.

VI. **The great purpose for which God has chosen and called us is the praise of the glory of His grace** (ver. 6).—God has made this display of His grace that unworthy creatures might apply to Him for salvation. We are to praise the glory of God's grace by a cheerful compliance with the precepts and thankful acceptance of the blessings of the gospel, by a holy life, and by encouraging others to accept that grace. Believers will, in a more perfect manner, show forth the praise of God's glorious grace in the future world.—*Lathrop.*

Vers. 5, 6. *The Glory of Divine Grace*—

I. **Is the sublime outcome of the divine will.**—"According to His will" (ver. 5).

II. **Is a signal display of joyous benevolence.**—"According to the good pleasure of His will" (ver. 5).

III. **Demands profound and grateful recognition.**—"To the praise of the glory of His grace" (ver. 6).

Ver. 5. *The Adoption of Children by Jesus Christ.*—Explain the nature of the privilege.

I. **Its greatness.**—1. From the Being by whom it is conferred. 2. From the price at which it was procured. 3. From the inheritance which it conveys. 4. From the manner in which it is bestowed. The new birth.

II. **Its benefits.**—1. The spirit of adoption. 2. Divine care and protection. 3. Divine pity and compassion. 4. Overruling all trials for spiritual good.

III. **The evidences of its possession.**—1. The image of God. 2. The love of God. 3. The love of the brethren.

IV. **Its appropriate duties.**—The children of God ought—1. To walk worthy of their high vocation. 2. To be subject to their Father's will both in doing and in suffering. 3. To be mindful of what they owe to their spiritual kindred. 4. To long for their heavenly home.—*G. Brooks.*

Ver. 6. *The Adopting Love of God.*

I. **Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Beloved of the Father.**—From eternity during the preparatory dispensation

in the days of His flesh; now; for ever. An ineffable love.

II. **The Father's love of believers is on account of the Lord Jesus Christ.**—He accepts them for the sake of Christ as united to Christ. Acceptance distinct from pardon.

III. **The Father's acceptance of believers is an act of sovereign grace.**—Irrespective of their merit. Neither the necessity of the atonement nor the obligation of faith is inconsistent with acceptance by grace.

IV. **The Father's acceptance of believers for the sake of Christ promotes His own glory.**—His glory is the end of all things. Implore all to seek acceptance with God through Christ.—*G. Brooks.*

Vers. 7, 8. *Redemption through Christ.*

I. **The subjects of this redemption.**—Redemption, though offered without distinction to all who hear the gospel, is actually bestowed only on those who repent of their sins and believe on the Saviour.

II. **The nature of this redemption.**—There is a twofold redemption—the redemption of the soul from the guilt of sin by pardon, and the redemption of the body from the power of the grave by the resurrection. The former of these is intended. But these two privileges are connected. The remission of sin, which is a release from our obligation to punisbment, is accompanied with a title to eternal life.

III. **The way and manner in which believers become partakers of this privilege.**—Through the blood of Christ. The death of Christ is the ground of our hope. Jesus Christ, through whose blood we obtain forgiveness, is the Beloved. This character of Christ shows the excellence of His sacrifice and displays the grace of God in giving Him for us.

IV. **Observe the foundation from which our redemption flows.**—"The riches of His grace." Every blessing bestowed on sinners is by grace; but the blessing of forgiveness is according to the riches, the exceeding, the unsearchable riches of grace.

V. **In this dispensation of mercy God has abounded to us in all wisdom and prudence.**—The most glorious display of God's wisdom is in the work of our redemption. Here the perfections of God appear in the brightest lustre and most beautiful harmony. In this dispensation there is a door of hope opened to the most unworthy, believers have the greatest possible security, and it holds forth the most awful terrors against sin and the most powerful motives to obedience.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 7. *Pardon an Act of Sovereign Grace.*—This free and gracious pleasure of God or purpose of His will to act towards sinners according to His own abundant goodness is another thing that influences forgiveness. Pardon flows immediately from a sovereign act of free grace. This free purpose of God's will and grace for the pardoning of sinners is that which is principally intended when we say, "There is forgiveness with Him"; that is, He is pleased to forgive, and so to do is agreeable to His nature. Now the mystery of this grace is deep; it is eternal, and therefore incomprehensible. Few there are whose hearts are raised to a contemplation of it. Men rest and content themselves in a general notion of mercy which will not be advantageous to their souls. Freed they would be from punishment; but what it is to be forgiven they inquire not. So what they know of it they come easily by, but will find in the issue it will stand them in little stead. But these fountains of God's actings are revealed that they may be the fountains of our comforts.—*John Owen.*

Ver. 8. *The Harmony of Christianity in its Personal Influence.*

I. **The wisdom and prudence of the gospel are manifested by showing with equal distinctness the divine justice and mercy.**—Justice does not arrest the hand of mercy; mercy does not restrain the hand of justice. They

speak with a united voice, they command with a united authority, they shine with a united glory. Neither excels. The one does not overbear the other. Their common splendour is like the neutral tint, the effulgent colourlessness of the undecomposed ray.

II. **By exhibiting the incarnate Son as alike the object of love and adoration.**

III. **By insisting most uniformly on divine grace and human responsibility.**

IV. **By the proposal of the freest terms of acceptance and the enforcement of the most universal practice of obedience.**

V. **By inspiring the most elevated joy in connection with the deepest self-abhorrence.**

VI. **By displaying the different conduct pursued by the Deity towards sin and the sinner.**

VII. **By combining the genuine humility of the gospel with our dignity as creatures and our conscientiousness as saints.**

VIII. **By causing all supernatural influence to operate through our rational powers and by intelligent means.**

IX. **By resting our evidence of safety and spiritual welfare upon personal virtues.**

X. **By supplying the absence of enslaving fear with salutary caution.**

XI. **The actual existence of our depraved nature and the work of sanctification in us pressing forward to its maturity tend to that regulated temperament of mind which we urge.**

XII. **Certain views of personal conduct are so coupled in the gospel with the noblest views of grace that any improper warping of our minds is counteracted.**

XIII. **While the distinctive blessings and honours of the Christian might tend to elate him, he is affected by the most opposite motives.**

XIV. **God abounds in this wisdom and prudence towards us by most strongly abstracting us from the things of earth and yet giving us the deepest interest in its relations and engagements.**—All the truths of revelation are only parts of one system, but their effects upon the believing mind are common and interchangeable. There is no extraneous, no irreconcilable, no confusing element in Christianity. It is of One; it is one. And if we be Christians, our experience will be the counterpart of it. As it works out from apparent shocks and collisions its perfect unity, so shall our experience be wrought in the same way. In obeying from our hearts its form, whatever of its influence may seem to interfere with each other, they will all be found to establish our heart; as the opposing currents often swell the tide and more proudly waft the noble bark it carries, as the counterbalancing forces of the firmament bear the star onward in its unquivering poise and undeviating revolution.—*R. W. Hamilton.*

Vers. 9-12. *The Mystery of the Gospel.*

I. **The sovereign grace of God in making known to us the mystery of His will.**—1. *The gospel is called the mystery of God's will, the mystery which from the beginning was hid in God, and the unsearchable riches of Christ.* Not that these phrases represent the gospel as obscure and unintelligible, but that the gospel scheme was undiscoverable by the efforts and researches of human reason, and could be made known to men only by the light of divine revelation. There are many things in the gospel which are and will remain incomprehensible to human reason; but though we cannot fully comprehend them, we may sufficiently understand them.

2. *God has made known to us His will "according to the good pleasure which He purposed in Himself."*—Though the reason of His administration is not made known to us, yet all His purposes are directed by consummate wisdom. He is Sovereign in the distribution of His favours; His goodness to us is no wrong to the heathen.

II. **The purpose of God in making**

known to us the mystery of His will (ver. 10).—1. *The gospel is called "the dispensation of the fulness of times."* It was introduced at the time exactly ordained in the purpose, and expressly predicted in the word of God, and in this sense may be called "the dispensation of the fulness of times."

2. *One end of this dispensation was that God "might gather together in one all things in Christ"* (ver. 10).—To form one body in Christ, to collect one Church, one great kingdom under Him.

3. *The gospel is intended to unite in Christ all things both which are in heaven and which are in earth.*—The Church of Christ consists of the whole family in heaven and earth. Here is a powerful argument for Christian love and for Christian candour.

III. **In Him we have obtained an inheritance that we should be to the praise of His glory who first trusted in Christ.**—The believing Jews were the first who trusted in Christ. They, with the believing Gentiles, were made heirs of God, not only to the privileges of His Church on earth, but to an inheritance also in the heavens. As they had first obtained an inheritance and first trusted in Christ, so they should be first to the praise of God's glory.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 10. *Christ and Creation.*—If the divine purpose of salvation was regulative for the creation of the world, then must salvation as well as creation be grounded on the original Mediator. But that all creation should be thus grounded in Him includes a twofold idea—that not only were all things created by Him, but also for Him, who is to bring to completion both the saving purpose of God as also the whole development of the world which tends towards the realisation of the purpose of God. And because the world has not yet reached this goal, then all things have progressively their existence in Him; and it cannot fail, because the goal of the world established in Him must be realised. But how this goal of the world is conceived of, this verse shows, when it is mentioned as the final goal of the institution of God's grace that all things may be gathered in Christ as in a centre. He has been appointed to be this central point of the universe, as the universe was created in Him; but here it is pointed out that He must again become so, because a dislocation in the original constitution of the world has taken place by sin, whose removal again the dispensation of grace must have in view. The goal of the world is no longer regarded as the perfected kingdom of God, in which the absolute, universal Lordship of God is realised, in contrast to the earthly, mediatorial Lordship of Christ, which the latter gives back to the Father, and that the exaltation of Christ is extended over everything which has a name both in this world and in the future. One cannot think of the goal of the world without Him in whom even creation has its root.—*Weiss.*

Vers. 11, 12. *Christ the Inheritance of the Saints.*—1. Christ the Mediator is that person in whom believers have this heavenly inheritance, as they have all their other spiritual blessings leading to heaven in Him. Every believer hath already obtained this glorious inheritance, though not in complete personal possession. 2. As God is an absolute worker, sovereign Lord of all His actions, His will being His only rule, so His will is always joined with and founded upon the light of counsel and wisdom, and therefore He can will nothing but what is equitable and just. 3. It is no small privilege for any to be trusters in Christ before others. It is a matter of their commendation; it glorifies God in so far as their example and experience may prove an encouraging motive to others. It carries several advantages; the sooner a man closes with Christ, the work will be done more easily, he is the sooner freed from sin, the sooner capacitated to do more service to God, and his concernments are the sooner out of hazard. —*Fergusson.*

Ver. 13. *The Gospel of your Salvation.*

I. **The import of the salvation proclaimed in the gospel.**—It is deliverance from all the evils that have been brought on us by the Fall. 1. From ignorance, not of science, but of God. 2. From guilt, or the penalty which the law inflicts. 3. From the power of sin, of which we are slaves. 4. From the sorrows and calamities of life, which it does not remove, but alleviate and transform. 5. From the power and fear of death. 6. From everlasting perdition.

II. **The persons to whom this view of the gospel is specially applicable.**—1. To the unconverted. It teaches them what they are. 2. To the awakened. It teaches them what they need. 3. To believers. It awakens their gratitude, it reproves their lukewarmness, it stimulates their charity.

III. **The reflections to which this view of the gospel gives rise.**—How precious in our estimation should be—(1) the gospel, (2) the Saviour, (3) the Saviour's work, (4) the Saviour's ordinances, (5) the Saviour's servants and people, (6) the Saviour's second coming.—*G. Brooks.*

The Truth and Divinity of the Christian Religion.

I. **It is reasonable to suppose that God should at some time or season fully and clearly reveal unto men the truth concerning Himself and concerning them as He and they stand related to each other, concerning His nature and will, concerning our state and duty.**—Argued from (1) His goodness, (2) His wisdom, (3) His justice, (4) His divine majesty.

II. **That no other revelation of that kind and importance has been made, which can with good probability pretend to have thus proceeded from God, so as by Him to have been designed for a general, perpetual, complete instruction and obligation of mankind.**—1. *Paganism* did not proceed from divine revelation, but from human invention or diabolical suggestion. All the pagan religions vanished, together with the countenance of secular authority and power sustaining them. 2. *Mohammedanism* an imposture. 3. *Judaism* was defective. (1) This revelation was not general—not directed, nor intended to instruct and oblige mankind. (2) As this revelation was particular, so was it also partial—as God did not by it speak His mind to all, so did He not therein speak out all His mind. (3) It was not designed for perpetual obligation and use.

Conclusion.—No other religion, except Christianity, which has been or is in being, can reasonably pretend to have proceeded from God as a universal, complete, and final declaration of His mind and will to mankind.—*Barrow.*

Vers. 13, 14. *The Assurance of the Christian Inheritance.*—By the first act of faith the whole tendencies of man's life are reversed. Until then the present has been his world and the earth his place of rest; then, by the inspiration of the cross, a spiritual world dawns upon his view, that everlasting region becomes his home, and life assumes the character of a pilgrimage. We need to have the deep assurance of the immortal kingdom in order to live an earnest life in a world like this.

I. **The nature of the assurance.**—The voices of promises in the Christian's soul—the longings, aspirations, hopes, rising from the Spirit of God within us—are more than promises; they are earnests, *i.e.* most certain assurances of the inheritance to come. This inheritance of spiritual life consists of three great elements—love, power, blessedness.

II. **The necessity of the assurance.**—The inheritance is given, but not reached. Between the gift and its attainment there lies a long path of conflict in which the old struggle between the flesh and the Spirit reveals itself in three forms: 1. Sense against the soul; 2. The present against the

future; 3. Steadfast work against the roving propensities of the heart.—*E. L. Hull.*

The Holy Spirit and the Earnest of the Inheritance.

I. **The character of the inheritance.**—The teaching of the passage is that heaven is likest the selectest moments of devotion that a Christian has on earth. Heaven is the perfecting of the life of the Spirit begun here, and the loftiest attainments of that life here are but the beginnings and infantile movements of immature beings.

II. **The grounds of certainty that we shall ultimately possess the fulness of the inheritance.**—The true ground of certainty lies in this, that you have the Spirit in your heart, operating His own likeness and moulding you, sealing you, after His own stamp and image. 1. The very fact of such a relation between man and God is itself the great assurance of immortality and everlasting life. 2. The characteristics that are produced by this Holy Spirit's indwelling, both in the perfectness and imperfection, are the great guarantee of the inheritance being ours. 3. The Holy Spirit in a man's heart makes him desire and believe in the inheritance.—*A. Maclaren.*

The Faith of the Early Christians.

I. **The object of their faith.**—The word of truth and the gospel of salvation. It is the word of truth. It contains all that truth which concerns our present duty and our future glory. It comes attended with demonstrations of its own divinity. It is the gospel of our salvation. It discovers to us our ruined, helpless condition, the mercy of God to give us salvation, the way in which it is procured for us, the terms on which we may become interested in it, the evidences by which our title to it must be ascertained, and the glory and happiness it comprehends.

II. **The forwardness and yet the reasonableness of their faith.**—They trusted in Christ after they heard the word. They acted as honest and rational men: they did not trust before they heard it, nor refused to trust after they heard it. They did not take the gospel on the credit of other men without examination; nor did they reject it when they had an opportunity to examine it for themselves. Their faith stood not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

III. **The happy consequence of their faith.**—They were "sealed with the Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance." They became partakers of such a divine influence as sanctified them to a meetness for heaven, and thus evidenced their title to it.

1. *The sealing of the Spirit.*—Sealing literally signifies the impression of the image or likeness of one thing upon another. A seal impressed on wax leaves there its own image. Instruction is said to be sealed when it is so impressed on the heart as to have an abiding influence. So the sealing of believers is their receiving on their hearts the divine image and character by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. The word of truth is here considered as the seal, the believing heart as the subject, the Holy Spirit as the agent or sealer, and the effect produced as a divine likeness. By a like metaphor Christians are represented as cast in the mould of the gospel. The same idea is conveyed by the metaphor of writing the word on the heart.

2. *The earnest of the Spirit.*—The Spirit, having sealed believers or sanctified them after God's image, becomes an earnest of their inheritance. The firstfruits were pledges of the ensuing harvest; earnest-money in a contract is a pledge of the fulfilment of it. So the graces and comforts of religion are to Christians the anticipations and foretastes of the happiness which awaits them in heaven. (1) The virtues of the Christian temper, which are the fruits of the Spirit, are to believers an earnest of their inheritance because they are in part a fulfilment of the promise which conveys the

inheritance. (2) They are an earnest as they are preparatives for it. (3) The sealing and sanctifying influence of the Spirit is especially called an earnest of the inheritance because it is a part of the inheritance given beforehand. It is the earnest till the redemption of the purchased possession. When we actually possess the inheritance the earnest will be no longer needed.

Lessons.—1. *All the operations of the Spirit on the minds of men are of a holy nature and tendency.* 2. *We are strongly encouraged to apply to God for the needful influences of His grace* 3. *We can have no conclusive evidence of a title to heaven without the experience of a holy temper.* 4. *Christians are under indispensable obligations to universal holiness.—Lathrop.*

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

Prayer for Higher Spiritual Knowledge—

I. **Thankfully acknowledges the grace already possessed** (vers. 15, 16).—The possession of some grace prompts the prayer for more. The apostle recognises the faith of the Ephesians in the person and work of Christ and the love they displayed towards the saints. Knowing the source of that grace and that the supply was unlimited, he thanks God and is encouraged to pray for its increase. How slow we are to see the good in others and to thank God for any good found in ourselves! Ingratitude dulls our sensibilities and chills the breath of prayer. If we were more thankful, we should be more prayerful. The way to excite gratitude is to interest ourselves in the highest welfare of others.

II. **Invokes the impartation of additional spiritual insight** (vers. 17, 18).—The apostle prays, not for temporal good or for prosperity in outward things, or even for the cessation of trouble and persecution, but for an accession of mental and spiritual blessings. He prays for the opening of the eye of the mind that the vision of spiritual realities may be more clear and reliable, and that the soul may be possessed with a fuller knowledge of Christ. The highest wisdom is gained by a more accurate conception of Him "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Sin enters the heart through the avenue of the senses and passions, grace through a spiritually enlightened understanding. Pride, prejudice, and error are expelled from the mind not so much by the repression of evil tendencies as by the entrance and maintenance of superior moral truths. The revelation of the Spirit in the word will not suffice, unless the light of the same Spirit shines through every faculty and power of the inquiring soul. "Man's knowledge is not perfect within the domain of creation, still less can he know the things of the invisible world. Only by living in a sphere does he gather knowledge of what is found there: knowledge comes from experience of occurrences. Without a disposition of the heart the sense of the understanding is not enlarged and sharpened. Sensible, mental, spiritual knowledge refers to life spheres in which he who knows must move. Only the believing, loving, longing one knows and grows in knowledge unto knowledge." We need, therefore, continually to pray for the Spirit of wisdom—a keener spiritual insight.

III. **Unveils the grandeur of the divine inheritance in believers.**—"That ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (ver. 18). The increase of spiritual knowledge is an ever-widening revelation of the value and splendour of divine blessings already possessed and in prospect of possession. Faith enjoys the inheritance now, and hope anticipates an ampler revelation and richer experience of its unspeakable blessedness. The phrase "the riches of the glory of His inheritance" indicates how utterly inadequate human language is to describe its boundless spiritual wealth. It is an inheritance implying union to Him who only hath immortality and is eternal. Rust cannot corrupt it, nor decay consume, nor death destroy.

We have not only an inheritance in Christ, but He has also an inheritance in us. He finds more in us than we find ourselves, and we should never know it was there but for the revelation of Himself within us.

Lessons.—1. *Prayer and thanksgiving go together.* 2. *The soul needs a daily revelation of truth.* 3. *The highest spiritual truths are made known to the soul that prays.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 15-18. *Clearer Discernment in Divine Things desired.*

I. **The things for which the apostle commends the Ephesians.**—Their faith in Jesus and love to the saints (ver. 15). 1. Faith is such a sensible, realising belief of the gospel in its general truth and in its particular doctrines and precepts as gives it a practical influence on the heart and life; it looks up to God through Christ; it is made perfect by works. 2. Faith is accompanied with love. Viewing and applying the examples and doctrines of the gospel, it purifies the soul unto unfeigned love of the brethren. The gospel requires us to love all men, sinners as well as saints, enemies as well as friends. If we love God for His moral perfections, we shall love the saints as far as they appear to have these divine qualities wrought into their temper. Our love is not to be confined to a party, to those who live in the same city and worship in the same sanctuary, but embraces all.

II. **Paul expresses his great thankfulness to God for the success of the gospel.**—"I cease not to give thanks" (ver. 16). He rejoiced in the honour which redounded to the crucified Jesus. He rejoiced to think how many were rescued from the power of Satan, and in the consequences which might ensue to others. If the prevalence of religion is matter of thankfulness, we should spare no pains to give it success.

III. **He prays for the future success of the gospel** (ver. 16).—The best Christians have need to make continual improvement. Paul was no less constant in his prayers than in his labours for the spiritual interest of mankind. He knew that the success of all his labours depended on God's blessing; he therefore added to them his fervent prayers. When ministers and people strive together in their prayers, there is reason to hope for God's blessing on both.

IV. **He prayed for spiritual enlightenment** (vers. 17, 18).—That they may seek wisdom from God to understand the revelation He has given, and such an illumination of mind as to discern the nature and excellence of the things contained in this revelation. Christians must not content themselves with their present knowledge, but aspire to all riches of the full assurance of understanding.

V. **He prayed for power to appreciate Christian privileges** (ver. 18).—To know the hope of the divine calling, the possibility and assurance of attaining the heavenly kingdom. To know what a rich and glorious inheritance God has prepared for and promised to the saints. Though we cannot comprehend its dimensions nor compute its value, yet when we consider the grace of the Being who conveys it, the riches of the price which brought it, and the divine preparation by which the heirs are formed to enjoy it, we must conceive it to be unspeakably glorious.—*Lathrop.*

The Apprehension of Spiritual Blessings.

I. **Further spiritual blessings are to be apprehended by the saints, therefore their condition is a relative one.**—The Ephesians had already received spiritual blessings (vers. 11-15). How much more is here. The possessed bears some proportion to what is to be received. Without this relative view the estimate is vague and erroneous. The further gifts consist specially in

the clearer sight and the more certain and enlarged experience of what they already saw and possessed. "Him," "His calling," "His inheritance," "His mighty power"—these were to be theirs in a degree of exceeding greatness and glory.

II. **Unless saints apprehend blessings now attainable, they live below their privilege.**—"If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldest have asked of Him." Without some knowledge there is neither faith nor desire. With these unveilings the heart is deeply moved with the sense of obligation to possess, it is attracted and filled with desire and animation. Otherwise, with an ignorant satisfaction, the condition must remain relatively lean and impoverished.

III. **The spiritual apprehension of these blessings is the gift of God.**—This is needed because of their divine nature. As we cannot properly see what the sun has called into life and beauty without his light, so these blessings are truly seen only in the light of the Sun of Righteousness. Through the Redeemer the Spirit is given. He gives the Spirit to enlighten both the object and the eye, to "testify," to "show," to "glorify," to reveal, "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." Thus these blessings are seen, not distantly and dimly, but in their nearness and unveiled glory, whilst He creates in the heart corresponding sympathy, desire, and assurance. Nothing can compensate for this gift—no mere intelligence, no reflection upon past experience, no mere help from others.

IV. **This gift is bestowed in answer to prayer.**—This particular bestowment comes under the promise of the Spirit to believing prayer. This is a gift. Gifts are asked for, not made ours in any other way. This gift is awaiting and challenging prayer, importunate prayer. That an ever-deepening desire for these spiritual gifts may be ours, let us often ask—What truths are given to me, which, if the eyes of my understanding were enlightened, would now exert the most positive influence over me, lifting me into the clearer light of God's relations, thus empowering me to live above the standard of natural strength, and so to fulfil His present designs? Think of the alternative.—*J. Holmes.*

Vers. 15, 16. *True Religion self-revealing*—

I. **In its moral results.**—"Faith and love" (ver. 15).

II. **Is evident to others.**—"I heard of your faith" (ver. 15).

III. **Is the occasion of constant thanksgiving.**—"Cease not to give thanks for you" (ver. 16).

IV. **Calls forth a spirit of prayer.**—"Making mention of you in my prayers" (ver. 16).

Vers. 17, 18. *Spiritual Enlightenment.*—1. The wisdom which Christians are to seek is not that carnal wisdom which is emnity to God, nor natural wisdom or knowledge of the hidden mysteries of nature, nor the wisdom of divine mysteries, which is only a gift and floweth from a common influence of the Spirit, but that whereof the Spirit of God by His special operation and influence is author and worker, and is more than a gift, even the grace of wisdom, which is not acquired by our own industry, but cometh from above. 2. It is not sufficient for attaining this grace of wisdom that the truths be plainly revealed by the Spirit in Scripture. There must be the removal of natural darkness from our understandings that we may be enabled to take up that which is revealed, as in beholding colours by the outward sense there must be not only an outward light to make the object conspicuous, but also the faculty of seeing in the eye. A blind man cannot see at noonday, nor the sharpest-sighted at midnight. 3. Though those excellent things which are not yet possessed, but only hoped for, are known in part, yet so excellent are they in themselves, and remote from our knowledge, and

so much are we taken up with trifles and childish toys, that even believers who have their thoughts most exercised about them are in a great part ignorant of them. 4. As the things hoped for and really to be enjoyed in the other life are of the nature of an inheritance not purchased by us but freely bestowed upon us, so they are properly Christ's inheritance, who has proper right to it as the natural Son of God and by virtue of His own purchase; but the right we have is communicated to us through Him, in whom we have received the adoption of children and are made heirs and co-heirs with Christ. 5. It is a glorious inheritance, there being nothing there but what is glorious. The sight shall be glorious, for we shall see God as we are seen, the place glorious, the company glorious, our souls and bodies shall be glorious, and our exercise glorious, giving glory to God for ever and ever.—*Fergusson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 19—23.

The Church Complete in Christ.

I. **The Church is the creation of divine power** (ver. 19).—The Church does not consist in massive architecture or ornate decorations, not in ecclesiastical organisations and councils. It is not the offspring of the most elaborately constructed creed. It is not confined within the limits of the most expansive ecclesiastical epithet. It is a divine, spiritual creation. It consists of souls redeemed by the sacrifice of Jesus, clinging to Him for pardon, peace, and righteousness, and created in Him, by "the working of the mighty power" of the divine Spirit, for good works, and therefore continually striving to disseminate the good they have themselves received. The apostolic idea of the Church was coloured by the leading characteristic of the man. To St. Peter it was the Church as influenced by law—the confessing Church; to St. Paul it was the Church influenced by the freedom of faith—the witnessing Church; to St. John it was the Church as filled with the ideality of faith—working and keeping joyful holiday, the adorned Bride (Rev. xix. 7, 8). The Church is a constant revelation of "the exceeding greatness of His power" who first originated it and sustains its ever-widening growth.

II. **The divine power that creates the Church instals Christ as the supreme authority.**—1. *This power raised Christ from the deepest humiliation to the highest dignity* (vers. 20, 21). It raised Him from the cross to the throne, from the domain of the dead to the life and everlasting glory of the heavenly world. "God ascended with jubilation, and the Lord with the sound of the trumpet. Certainly, if when He brought His only begotten Son into the world He said, 'Let all the angels worship Him'; much more, now that He ascends on high and hath led captivity captive, hath He given Him a name above all names, that at the name of Jesus all knees should bow. And if the holy angels did so carol at His birth in the very entrance into that estate of humiliation and infirmity, with what triumph they receive Him now returning from the perfect achievement of man's redemption! And if, when His type had vanquished Goliath and carried the head into Jerusalem, the damsels came forth to meet him with dances and timbrels, how shall we think those angelic spirits triumph in meeting the great Conqueror of hell and death! How did they sing, 'Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in'!"

2. *This power invests Christ with supreme rule and authority* (ver. 22). On the night when Christ was born what a difference was there in all outward marks of distinction between the child of the Hebrew mother as He lay in His

lowly cradle, and the Augustus Cæsar, whose edict brought Mary to Bethlehem, as he reposed in his imperial palace. And throughout the lifetime of the two there was but little to lessen that distinction. The name of the one was known and honoured over the whole civilised globe, the name of the Other scarce heard of beyond the narrow bounds of Judea. How stands it now? The throne of the Cæsars, the throne of mere human authority and power, has perished. But the empire of Jesus, the empire of pure, undying, self-sacrificing love, will never perish; its sway over the consciences and hearts of men, as the world grows older, becomes ever wider and stronger (*Hanna*). The rule of Christ will last till all enemies are subdued, and obedience to Him becomes a reverential and joyous experience.

III. **The Church is complete as it is endowed with the divine fulness of Christ** (ver. 23).—The Church to-day seems broken into fragments, torn by divisions and strife; but by-and-by it will blend in a glorious unity. Take a mass of quicksilver, let it fall on the floor, and it will split into a vast number of distinct globules; gather them up, and put them together again, and they will coalesce into one body as before. Thus God's people below are sometimes divided into various parties, though they are all in fact members of one and the same mystic body. But when taken up from the world and put together in heaven they will constitute one glorious, undivided Church for ever and ever. The completeness of the Church is not the aggregation of all the virtues of the saints blended in beauteous and harmonious unity, but the glory of the divine fulness that pervades every part.

Lessons.—1. *The Church as a divine creation is a revelation of Christ.* 2. *The Church is composed of those who are created anew in Christ Jesus.* 3. *Christ is everything to His Church.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 19-23. *The Dignity and Dominion of Christ.*

I. **The first step in Christ's exaltation was the resurrection from the dead.**—This miracle is an incontestable evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, and an evidence of the great doctrine of the resurrection of the body and a future life, and of the efficacy of Christ's blood to expiate the guilt of our sins. If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we must believe that the same mighty power which wrought in Him can also work in us to raise us from the dead.

II. **The next step is His ascension to heaven and session at God's right hand** (ver. 20). The right hand is the place of honour and respect, and denotes superior dignity. Christ sitting at God's right hand signifies He has ceased from His labours and sufferings and entered into a state of repose and joy, and imports authority and power. He is exalted not only as Ruler, but also as Intercessor.

III. **The exaltation of Christ is supreme.**—His kingdom extends to all creatures in heaven, earth, and under the earth. The government of the natural world is in His hands, as well as the government of the Church. He has dominion over devils. His last and most glorious act is the judgment of the world.

IV. **The end for which Christ exercises His high and extensive dominion** (vers. 22, 23).—All His government is managed in reference to the good of the Church. See how criminal and dangerous it is to oppose the interest of the Church. If the Church is Christ's body, let us honour it, study to preserve unity in it, labour for its edification and comfort. Let us honour and reverence our Head, and never presumptuously lift up ourselves against the Church.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 19. *The Power of God in Conversion.*—1. The power God exercises in converting and carrying on the work of grace to glory is not only great, but exceeds all power that might impede that work, so that there is no power in the devil, the world, sin, or death which this power does not overcome, nor any impotency in believers which this greatness of power will not help and strengthen. There is no more pregnant proof of God's omnipotent power than in converting sinners from sin to holiness. 2. This mighty power of God extends to all times. It works in the first conversion of believers, preserves them in a state of grace, actuating their graces that they may grow, and continues till their graces are perfected. 3. The experimental knowledge of God's way of working is to be carefully sought after, to make us thankful for His gracious working in us, in order that our knowledge of God may be increased and our faith and hope in Him strengthened.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 20. *The Future Life.*

I. **Our virtuous friends at death go to Jesus Christ.**—Here is one great fact in regard to futurity. The good on leaving us here meet their Saviour, and this view alone assures us of their unutterable happiness. The joys of centuries will be crowded into that meeting. This is not fiction. It is truth founded on the essential laws of the mind. Their intercourse with Jesus Christ will be of the most affectionate and ennobling character. They are brought to a new comprehension of His mind and to a new reception of His Spirit. They will become joint workers—active, efficient ministers—in accomplishing His great work of spreading virtue and happiness. They retain the deepest interest in this world. They love human nature as never before, and human friends are prized as above all price.

II. **Our virtuous friends go not to Jesus only, but to the great and blessed society which is gathered round Him.**—The redeemed from all regions of earth. They meet peculiar congratulations from friends who had gone before them to that better world, and especially from all who had in any way given aids to their virtue. If we have ever known the enjoyments of friendship, of entire confidence, of co-operation in honourable and successful labours with those we love, we can comprehend something of the felicity of a world where souls, refined from selfishness, open as the day, thirsting for new truth and virtue, endowed with new power of enjoying the beauty and grandeur of the universe, allied in the noblest works of benevolence, and continually discovering new mysteries of the Creator's power and goodness, communicate themselves to one another with the freedom of perfect love. They enter on a state of action, life, and effort. Still more, they go to God. They see Him with a new light in all His works. They see Him face to face, by immediate communion. These new relations of the ascended spirit to the universal Father, how near, how tender, how strong, how exalting! Heaven is a glorious reality. Its attraction should be felt perpetually. They who are safely gathered there say to us, Come and join us in our everlasting blessedness!—*Channing.*

Vers. 21, 22. *The Supremacy of Jesus*—

I. **Acquired by His resurrection power.**

II. **Places Him above the highest created intelligences and potentates.**

III. **Is expressed in a name that surpasses in dignity and greatness that which has ever been or can be celebrated in earth or heaven.**

IV. **Gives Him absolute control over all worlds.**—"And hath put all things under His feet" (ver. 22).

Vers. 22, 23. *Christ the Head of the Church.*

I. **The Church depends on Him for life, guidance, activity, and development.**—"Which is His body" (ver. 23).

II. **He governs all things in the interest of His Church.**—"And gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church" (ver. 22).

III. **The Church is a revelation of the greatness and glory of Christ.**—"The fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (ver. 23).

Ver. 22. *The Headship of Christ.*

I. **The extent of His headship.**—1. Over all worlds. 2. Over the whole human race. 3. Over the Church.

II. **The subserviency of its administration to the interests of His Church.**—1. For the edification of His Church. 2. For its defence. 3. For its increase.

III. **Its grounds.**—1. His merit. 2. His qualifications. Whom do ye serve?—*G. Brooks.*

The Headship of Christ.—The verse consists of two statements:—

I. **That Christ is Head over all things.**—The Father hath given Christ to be Head over all things. 1. Originally involved in a covenant or agreement between the Father and the Son. 2. Now a matter of history. 3. The path of Christ to the mediatorial throne capable of being traced. 4. He there laid deep the foundations. 5. The whole universe is under His sway—heaven, earth, hell, all worlds, all elements. 6. He is qualified for such dominion — divine attributes, angelic spirits, believers, the devil and wicked men, the Holy Spirit.

II. **That Christ is Head over all things to the Church.**—Christ sits upon the throne in the same character in which He trod the earth and hung upon the cross. 1. It is as Mediator. 2. The same ends which He contemplated. It was for the Church He clothed Himself in human form. 3. He gives a peculiar character to the entire divine government. He Christianises it. 4. He employs all His attributes, resources, creatures.

Lessons.—1. *Redemption is a wide and extended plan, not so easily accomplished, not so limited.* 2. *All creatures and dominions should do Christ homage.* 3. *The Church is secure from real danger.* 4. *Believers may well glory in Christ as their Head.—Stewart.*

CHAPTER II.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **And you did He quicken.**—The italics in A.V. and R.V. show a broken construction of St. Paul's meaning, the verb being supplied from ver. 5, where the broken thread is taken up again. **Dead in trespasses and sins.**—"Dead through," etc. (R.V.). "What did they die of?" it might be asked; and the apostle answers, "Of trespasses and sins" (so *Alford*). "The word for trespasses is one of a mournfully numerous group of words" (*Trench*). It has sometimes the milder meaning of "faults," "mitigating circumstances" being considered. It makes special reference "to the subjective passivity and suffering of him who misses or falls short of the enjoined command" (*Cremer*). Meyer denies any "*real* distinction between the words for 'trespasses' and 'sins.' They denote the same thing as a 'fall' and a 'missing.'"

Ver. 2.—"Shadows," says Meyer, "before the light which arises in ver. 4." **Wherein in time past ye walked.**—It is a sombre picture—men walking about "to find themselves dishonourable graves" in the "valley of the shadow of death," knowing not whither they go because the darkness—the gloom of spiritual death—"hath blinded their eyes" (1 John ii. 11). **According to the course of this world.**—Well translated by our modern "zeit-geist," or "spirit of the age." **The prince of the power of the air.**—However contemptuous St. Paul may be of the creations of the Gnostic fancy, he never dreams of saying there is nothing existent unless it can be seen and felt. The dark realm and its ruler are not myths to the apostle.

Ver. 3. **Among whom also we all had our conversation.**—St. Paul does not glorify himself at the expense of his readers' past life. True his had not been a life swayed by animal delights (Acts xxvi. 5), but it had been marked by implacable enmity to the Son of God. **And were by nature children of wrath.**—"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, . . . whether it be Jewish or Gentile."

Ver. 4. **But God, who is rich in mercy.**—"Unto all that call upon Him" (Rom. x. 12). "He hath shut up all into disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all" (Rom. xi. 32). **For His great love wherewith He loved us.**—"A combination only used when the notion of the verb is to be extended" (*Winer*).

Ver. 5. **Even when we were dead in sins.**—The phrase which closes ver. 3, difficult as it is, must receive an interpretation in harmony with this statement. It is the very marrow of the gospel that, "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." That the wrath of God is real we know, but "God is love." **By grace ye are saved.**—"Grace" is as truly characteristic of St. Paul's writing as his autograph signature; it, too, is the token ("sign-manual") in every epistle (2 Thess. iii. 17, 18).

Ver. 6. **In heavenly places.**—As in i. 3.

Ver. 7. **The exceeding riches of His grace.**—The wealth of mercy mentioned in ver. 4 more fully stated. Grace is condescension to an inferior or kindness to the undeserving. **In kindness toward us.**—"Kindness" here represents in the original "a beautiful word, as it is the expression of a beautiful grace" (*Trench*). It is that "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. v. 22) called "gentleness" in the A.V., but which would be better named "benignity."

Ver. 8. **For by grace are ye saved through faith.**—"'By grace' expresses the motive, 'through faith' the subjective means" (*Winer*). The emphasis is on "by grace."

Ver. 9. **Not of works, lest any man should boast.**—The more beautiful the works achieved the more natural it is for a man to feel his works to be meritorious. One can understand that a man jealous for the honour of God, like Calvin, should speak of the excellencies of those out of Christ as "splendid vices," even though we prefer another explanation of them.

Ver. 10. **For we are His workmanship.**—We get our word "poem" from that which we here translate workmanship, lit. "something made." Every Christian belongs to those of whom God says, "This people have I formed for Myself, that they should show forth My praise" (Isa. xliii. 21). The archetype of all our goodness lies in the divine thought, as the slow uprising of a stately cathedral is the embodiment of the conception of the architect's brain.

Ver. 11. **Wherefore remember, that ye, etc.**—All that follows in the verse serves to define the "ye," the verb following in ver. 12 after the repeated "ye"—"ye were without Christ." "Called Uncircumcision . . . called the Circumcision." As much rancour lies in these words as generally is carried by terms of arrogance on the part of those only nominally religious, and the scornful epithets flung in return. They can be matched by our modern use of "The world" and "Other-worldliness."

Ver. 12. **Without Christ.**—Not so much "not in possession of Christ" as "outside Christ," or, as R.V., "separate from Christ." The true commentary is John xv. 4, 5. The branch "severed from" the trunk by knife or storm bears no fruit thenceforth; disciples "apart from Christ can do nothing." **Being aliens from the commonwealth.**—What memories might start at this word! Did St. Paul think of the separation from the Jewish synagogue in Ephesus or of the fanatical outburst created in Jerusalem when "the Jews from Asia" saw Trophimus the Ephesian in company with the apostle? To such Jews the Gentiles were nothing but *massa perditionis.* Like vers. 2, 3, this is a reminder of the dark past, the misery of which did not consist in a Jewish taunt so much as in a life of heathenish vices. **Having no hope, and without God in the world.**—To be godless—not sure that there is any God—this is to take the "master-light of all our seeing" from us; to live regardless of Him, or wishing there were no God—"that way madness lies." To be "God-forsaken" with a house full of idols—that is the irony of idolatrous heathenism.

Ver. 13. **Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh.**—The Gentile may sing his hymn in Jewish words: "Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer; from everlasting is Thy name." "Lo-ammi" ("not My people") is no longer their name (Hos. ii. 23; Rom. ix. 24, 25).

Ver. 14. **For He is our peace, who hath made both one.**—"Not the Peacemaker merely, for indeed at His own great cost He procured peace, and is Himself the bond of union of both" (Jew and Gentile). **The middle wall of partition.**—M. Ganneau, the discoverer of the Moabite Stone, found built into the wall of a ruined Moslem convent a stone, believed to be from the Temple, with this inscription: "No stranger-born (non-Jew) may enter within the circuit of the barrier and enclosure that is around the sacred court; and whoever shall be caught [intruding] there, upon himself be the blame of the death that will con-

sequently follow." Josephus describes this fence and its warning inscription (*Wars of the Jews*, Bk. V., ch. v., § 2). It is rather the spirit of exclusiveness which Christ threw down. The stone wall Titus threw down and made all a common field, afterwards.

Ver. 15. **Having abolished in His flesh the enmity.**—The enmity of Jew and Gentile; the abolition of their enmity to God is mentioned later. "First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift," for reconciliation to God. **The law of commandments contained in ordinances.**—The slave whose duty it was to take the child to his teacher might say, "Don't do that." St. Paul does not regard the function of the law as more than that (Gal. iii. 23-25). **One new man.**—Trench, in an admirable section, distinguishes between the new in time (*recens*) and the new in quality (*novum*). The word here means new in quality, "as set over against that which has seen service, the outworn." "It is not an amalgam of Jew and Gentile" (*Meyer*).

Ver. 16. **That He might reconcile both unto God.**—The word "reconcile" implies "a *restitution* to a state from which they had fallen, or which was potentially theirs, or for which they were destined" (*Lightfoot*, Col. i. 20). **The cross having slain the enmity.**—Gentile authority and Jewish malevolence met in the sentence to that painful death; and both Gentile and Jew, acknowledging the Son of God, shall cease their strife, and love as brethren.

Ver. 17. **Came and preached peace.**—By means of His messengers, as St. Paul tells the Galatians that Christ was "evidently set forth crucified amongst them." **To you afar off, and to them that were nigh.**—Isaiah's phrase (lvii. 19). The Christ uplifted "out of the earth" draws *all men* to Him.

Ver. 18. **For through Him we both have access.**—St. Paul's way of proclaiming His Master's saying, "I am the door: by Me if *any man* enter in he shall be saved"; including the other equally precious, "I am the way: no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." "Access" here means "introduction."

Ver. 19. **So then.**—Inference of vers. 14-18. **Strangers and foreigners.**—By the latter word is meant those who temporarily abide in a place, but are without the privileges of it. There is a verb "to parish" in certain parts of England which shows how a word can entirely reverse its original meaning. It not only means "to adjoin," but "to belong to." **Fellow-citizens with the saints.**—Enjoying all civic liberties, and able to say, "This is my own, my native land," when he finds "Mount Zion and the city of the living God" (cf. Heb. xi. 13, 14). **And of the household of God.**—The association grows more intimate. The words might possibly mean "domestics of God" (Rev. xxii. 3, 4); but when we think of the "Father's house" we must interpret "of the family circle of God."

Ver. 20. **Being built upon the foundation.**—From the figure of a household St. Paul passes easily to the structure, based on "the Church's One Foundation." **The chief corner-stone.**—"The historic Christ, to whom all Christian belief and life have reference, as necessarily conditions through Himself the existence and endurance of each Christian commonwealth, as the existence and steadiness of a building are dependent on the indispensable corner-stone, which upholds the whole structure" (*Meyer*). The difference between our passage and 1 Cor. iii. 11 is one of figure only.

Ver. 21. **All the building.**—R.V. "each several building." **Fitly-framed-together.**—One word in the original, found again only in iv. 16 in this form.

Ver. 22. **For a habitation.**—The word so translated is found again only in Rev. xviii. 2, a sharp contrast to this verse.

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

The Children of Wrath—

I. **Are spiritually dead.**—"Who were dead in trespasses and sins" (ver. 1). The only life of which they are conscious, and in which all their activities are displayed, is a life of sin. They have no conception of a higher life. They are capable of a higher life, and know it not. The spiritual, the higher form of life, is entombed and buried under a mass of sin. It is inert, dead, in process of corruption. Dante refers to such as, "These wretched ones who never were alive; I ne'er forsooth could have believed it true, that death had slain such myriads of mankind." Sin first benumbs, then paralyses, and finally slays our spiritual sensibilities. The soul dead to God shall not be insensible to the reality of the divine wrath.

II. **Are under the spell of an unseen evil power** (ver. 2).—"The children of disobedience" are those who are withholding their allegiance from the Lord

Jesus Christ, all those who are unconverted; not mere gross sinners and open profligates, but such persons as are strangers to the spiritual life, although they may have many excellencies of nature and disposition. The apostle plainly asserts that before he was brought to the knowledge of Christ he was under the influence of the "prince of the power of the air." This is a startling statement. It is more startling still if we consider what sort of man Paul was before his conversion—how excellent, how earnest, how devoted to the external duties of a religious life. But startling as it is, it is the apostle who makes it of himself; and the inference is unavoidable, that all that mass of persons who are out of Christ and who are not partakers of His resurrection life, who have given their hearts to the world and not to the Saviour, are just the captives of Satan, and, without knowing it, are doing his lusts and accomplishing his will. The disease is not less deadly because it eats out the life without inflicting pain. The pestilence is not the less awful because it comes without giving notice of its presence, borne on the balmy breezes of the bright, cloudless, summer eve. The vampire does not do its work the less effectually because it fans its victim with its perfumed wings into an unconscious slumber whilst it drains away his life-blood and leaves him a corpse. And Satan is not the less real or the less destructive because he works his fatal work upon our souls without our even being conscious of his approach.

III. **Are prompted to sin by the instincts of a depraved nature** (ver. 3).—There is the twofold province of a man's being, by the lower of which he is allied to the brute creation, and by the higher to the angels, both being under the dominion of sin. There is the corrupt body of flesh, and in a higher sense there is the fleshly mind. Every unregenerate person lives more or less in one or the other of these provinces—either in the sphere of fleshly lusts or in the sphere of the fleshly mind. Either he lives simply an animal life, and is in consequence a fleshly man, whose life consists only in fulfilling the desires of his lower nature; or he lives in the higher province of the mind, but it is nevertheless the mind in darkness, in uncertainty, in doubt—mind and heart alike alienated from God through the unbelief which is in them. It would not do to argue from this that our passions are our sins. Sin is not in appetite, but lies in the insubordination of appetite. There is need of a curbing and governing will, and our discipline consists in subjugating the lower to the higher. A due balance between the two regions must be preserved, and it is when passion becomes master and the lower invades the province of the higher, when the subordinate becomes insubordinate, that appetite and passion become sin. The flesh is the great rival of the Spirit, for it asserts that dominion over a man which the Holy Spirit alone ought to occupy, and these two are constantly opposed to each other. The depravity within, working in the thoughts of the mind and the passions of the flesh, prompts to a course of disobedience and sin.

IV. **Are exposed to condemnation.**—"And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men." The apostle shows that even the Jews, who boasted of their birth from Abraham, were by natural birth equally children of wrath, as the Gentiles whom the Jews despised on account of their birth from idolaters. The phrase "children of wrath" is a Hebraism, meaning we are objects of God's wrath from childhood, in our natural state, as being born in sin, which God hates. Wrath abides on all who disobey the gospel in faith and practice.

Lessons.—1. *Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.* 2. *Your adversary the devil walketh about seeking whom he may devour.* 3. *Because there is wrath, beware!*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. *A State of Sin a State of Death.*

I. **There are some respects in which the death of the soul does not resemble the death of the body.**—1. It does not involve the extinction of faculties and affections. The dead body moves not, nor feels, nor acts. The dead soul still thinks and feels and wills. 2. It does not exempt from responsibility. The dead soul is commanded to repent and believe and obey. 3. It is not incapable of restoration on earth. The spiritually dead may become spiritually alive here.

II. **There are some respects in which the death of the soul does resemble the death of the body.**—1. In its cause. Sin. 2. In its extent. All men without exception. 3. In its consequences. The dead are utterly insensible, they fulfil none of the functions or duties of the living, they can be reanimated only by divine power. Address: (1) Those who are spiritually dead. (2) Those who have reason to believe that they are spiritually alive.—*G. Brooks.*

Vers. 1-3. *The State of Men without the Gospel.*

I. **The moral state of wicked men resembles a state of natural death** (ver. 1).—From the metaphor used in the text we are not to conclude that all sinners are alike, for though all are in a sense dead some are under a greater death than others. The metaphor is usually applied to sinners of the most vicious character. When we speak of human nature as totally depraved we mean only a total destitution of real holiness, not the highest possible degree of vitiosity. In order to denominate one a sinner it is not necessary that he should be as bad as possible. Though natural death does not, yet spiritual death does, admit of degrees. Evil men wax worse and worse, add sin to sin, and treasure up wrath against the day of wrath.

1. *Sinners may be said to be dead in respect of their stupidity.*—We read of some who are past feeling, whose conscience is seared, who have eyes which see not, ears which hear not, and a heart which is waxed gross. Their hearts are like a mortified limb which feels no pain under the scarifying knife.

2. *They are represented as wanting spiritual senses.* — They savour the things of the world, not the things which are of God. They indeed love the effects of God's goodness to them, but they delight not in His character as a holy, just, and faithful Being. They may feel a natural pleasure in certain mechanical emotions of the passions excited by objects presented to the sight, or by sounds which strike the ear, as the artificial tears from the image of the Virgin Mary will melt down an assembly of Catholics, or as a concert of musical instruments will rapture the hearers; but they relish not the word and ordinances of God, considered as means of holiness and as designed to convince them of their sins and bring them to repentance. If the word dispensed comes home to their conscience, they are offended. They lose the music of the pleasant song, and talk against it by the walls and in the doors of their houses.

3. *They resemble the dead in the want of vital warmth.*—If they have any fervour in religion, it is about the forms and externals of it, or about some favourite sentiments which they find adapted to soothe their consciences, not about those things in which the power of religion consists. As death deforms the body, so sin destroys the beauty of the soul. It darkens the reason, perverts the judgment, and disorders the affections. To be carnally-minded is death.

4. *They may be denominated dead as they are worthy of and exposed to punishment.*—This is called death because it is the separation of the soul from God and heaven, from happiness and hope, from all good and unto all evil. This is a death which awaits the impenitent.

II. **There is in ungodly men a general disposition to follow the way of the world.**—"According to the course of this world" (ver. 2). They, like dead carcasses, swam down the stream of common custom, and were carried away with the general current of vice and corruption.

1. *Most men have a general idea that religion is of some importance.*—Few can wholly suppress it, or reason themselves out of it. But what religion is and wherein it consists they seldom inquire, and never examine with any degree of attention. Such opinions as flatter their ungodly lusts, or pacify their guilty consciences, they warmly embrace. That scheme of doctrine which will make converts without exacting reformation, and give assurance without putting them to much trouble, they highly approve. The path which will lead men to heaven with little self-denial they readily pursue.

2. *There are many who blindly follow the examples of the world.*—Whether such a practice is right or wrong they take little pains to examine. It is enough that they see many who adopt it. They would rather incur the censure of their own minds and the displeasure of their God than stand distinguished by a singularity in virtue.

III. **They are under the influence of evil spirits.**—"According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience" (ver. 2). The number of evil spirits is very great, but there is one distinguished from the rest, and called the devil, Satan, the prince of the power of the air. The manner in which he works in the minds of men is by gaining access to their passions and lusts, which he inflames by suggesting evil thoughts or by painting images on the fancy. It was by the avarice of Judas and Ananias that he entered into them and filled their hearts.

IV. **The wickedness of men consists not merely in their evil works, but in the corrupt dispositions which prompt them to those works.**—"The lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (ver. 3). The lusts of the flesh are the vices of sensuality, as intemperance, uncleanness, debauchery, and excess of riot. The desires of the fleshly mind are the lusts which arise from the corruption of the mind in its connection with flesh, as pride, malice, envy, wrath, hatred, ambition, and covetousness. Though no man indulges every vice, yet every unregenerate man obeys the carnal mind.

V. **The indulgence of carnal lusts and passions brings on men the wrath of God.**—"The children of wrath" (ver. 3). A mind sunk in carnality is incapable of rational felicity; it is miserable in itself and from its own corruption and perverseness. If man subjects his nature to the lusts and passions, the order of nature is inverted, the law of creation violated, and the Creator dishonoured and offended.

Lessons.—1. *If you have not abandoned yourselves to the grossest forms of vice, it is because you have been placed under superior light and enjoyed a happier education than the heathen.* 2. *Though you may not have indulged all the lusts and vices which others have done, yet if you are children of disobedience you can no more be saved without renovation of heart and repentance of sin than they can.—Lathrop.*

Ver. 3. *The State of Nature.*

I. If by human nature you mean nature as seen in this man or that, then **unquestionably nature is evil**—individual nature, personal nature, is contrary to God's will. But if by human nature you mean nature as God made it, as it has been once in one man of our species and only one, and as by God's grace it shall be again; if you mean nature as it is according to the idea of the Creator as shown in Jesus Christ, as it is in the eyes of God imputed not as it is but as it shall be,—then that nature is a noble thing, a thing divine; for the life of the Redeemer Himself, what was it but the one true exhibition of our human nature?

II. **Paul says that by nature we**

fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind.—I pray you to observe that it is the second and not in the first sense that he here speaks of nature. The desires of the flesh mean the appetites; those of the mind mean the passions: to fulfil the desires of the flesh is to live the life of the swine; to fulfil those of the mind is to live the life of the devil. But this is the partiality, not the entireness, of human nature. Where is the conscience, where the spirit with which we have communion with God? To live to the flesh and to the mind is not to live to the nature that God gave us. We can no more call that living to our nature than we can say that a watch going by the mere force of the main-spring without a regulator is fulfilling the nature of a watch. To fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind is no more to fulfil the nature which God has given us than the soil fulfils its nature when it brings forth thorns and briars. St. Paul, in the epistle to the Romans, draws a distinction between himself and his false nature: "It is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me." Sin is the dominion of a false nature; it is a usurped dominion.

III. The next thing that Paul tells us is **that by nature we are children of wrath.**—In the state of nature we are in the way to bear the wrath of God. Yet God is not wrath; He is infinite love. The eternal severity of His nature does not feel our passions, He remains for ever calm; yet such is our nature that we must think of Him as wrath as well as love: to us love itself becomes wrath when we are in a state of sin. God must hate sin and be for ever sin's enemy. If we sin He must be against us: in sinning we identify ourselves with evil, therefore we must endure the consuming fire. So long as there is evil, so long will there be penalty. Sin, live according to the lusts of the flesh, and you will become the children of God's wrath; live after the spirit, the higher nature that is in you, and then the law hath hold on you no longer.—*F. W. Robertson.*

The Worst of Evils.

I. **By nature all are the children of wrath.** — 1. Because we want that original righteousness in which we were created and which is required to the purity and perfection of our nature. 2. Because all the parts and powers of our soul and body are depraved with original corruption. Our understandings are so bad that they understand not their own badness, our wills which are the queens of our souls become the vassals of sin, our memories like jet good only to draw straws and treasure up trifles of no moment, our consciences through errors in our understandings sometimes accusing us when we are innocent, sometimes acquitting us when we are guilty, our affections all disaffected and out of order. 3. Some may expect that as the master of the feast said to him that wanted the wedding garment, "Friend, how camest thou in hither?" so I should demand of original sin, "Foe, and worst of foes, how camest thou in hither, and by what invisible leaks didst thou soak into our souls?" But I desire, if it be possible, to present you this day a rose without prickles, to declare plain and positive doctrine without thorny disputes or curious speculations, lest, as Abraham's ram was caught in the thicket, so I embroil you and myself in difficult controversies. Let us not busy our brains so much to know how original sin came into us, as labour in our heart to know how it should be got out of us. But the worst is, most men are sick of the *rickets* in the soul, their heads swell to a vast proportion, puffed up with the emptiness of airy speculations, whilst their legs and lower parts do waste and consume, their practical parts decay, none more lazy to serve God in their lives and conversations.

II. **Ye parents to children**, see how, though against your wills, ye have propagated this wrath-deserving on your children unto your children; you *are bound*, both in honour and honesty, civility and Christianity, *to pluck them out of this pit.* 1. This you may do

by embracing the speediest opportunity to fasten the sacrament of baptism upon them. 2. Let them not want good prayers, which if steeped in tears will grow the better, good precepts, good precedents, and show thy child in thyself what he should follow, in others what he should shun and avoid. 3. In the low countries, where their houses lie buried in the ground, the laying of the foundation is counted as much as the rest of the foundation; so half our badness lies secret and unseen, consisting in original corruption, whereof too few take notice. Witches, they say, say the Lord's Prayer backward; but concupiscence, this witch in our soul, says all the commandments backward, and makes us cross in our practice what God commands in His precepts. Thus every day we sin, and sorrow after our sin, and sin after our sorrow. The wind of God's Spirit bloweth us one way, and the tide of our corruption hurrieth us another. These things he that seeth not in himself is sottish, blind; he that seeth and confesseth not is damnably proud; he that confesseth and bewaileth not is desperately profane; he that bewaileth and fighteth not against it is unprofitably pensive: but he that in some weak manner doeth all these is a saint in reversion here, and shall be one in possession hereafter.—*T. Fuller.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 4—9.

Salvation an Act of Divine Grace.

I. **Springing from the benevolence of God** (vers. 4, 7).—A good old saint once said, "There is nothing that affects me more profoundly, or more quickly melts my heart, than to reflect on the goodness of God. It is so vast, so deep, so amazing, so unlike and beyond the most perfect human disposition, that my soul is overwhelmed." The apostle seems to have been similarly affected as he contemplated the divine beneficence, as the phrases he here employs indicate. He calls it "the great love wherewith He loved us." God is "rich in mercy"—in irrepressible, unmerited compassion (ver. 4). Language is too poor to express all he sees and feels, and he takes refuge in the ambiguous yet suggestive expression, "The exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Jesus Christ" (ver. 7)—hinting at the sublime benignity of the divine nature longing to express itself through the noblest medium possible. By his rebellion and deliberate sin man had forfeited all claim to the divine favour, and his restoration to that favour, impossible of attainment by any efforts of his own, was an act of sheer divine goodness. Its spontaneity breaks in as a sweet surprise upon the sinning race. The most vicious and abandoned are included in its gracious provisions, and all men are taught that their salvation, if accomplished at all, must be as an act of free and undeserved grace.

II. **Salvation has its life and fellowship in Christ** (vers. 5, 6).—God has given us as unquestioned a resurrection from the death of sin as the body of Christ had from the grave, and the same divine power achieved both the one and the other. The spiritual life of both Jew and Gentile has its origin in Christ, and the axe is thus laid to the very root of spiritual pride and all glorying in ourselves. We are raised by His resurrection power to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This we do already by our spiritual fellowship with Him, and by anticipation we share the blessedness which we shall more fully enjoy by our union with Him in the heavenly world. The spiritual resurrection of the soul must precede, and will be the inviolable guarantee of the future glorious resurrection of the body. As the great Head of the Church is already in the heavenlies, so ultimately all the members that make up the body shall be gathered there. We are already seated there *in* Him as our Head, which is the ground of our hope; and we shall be hereafter seated there *by* Him, as the conferring cause, when hope shall be

swallowed up in fruition. Our life and fellowship in Christ are susceptible of indefinite expansion and enjoyment in the progressive evolutions of the future.

III. **Faith, the instrument of salvation, is the gift of divine grace** (ver. 8).—The question whether faith or salvation is the gift of God is decided by the majority of critics in favour of the former. This agrees with the obvious argument of the apostle, that salvation is so absolutely an act of divine grace that the power to realise it individually is also a free gift. Grace, without any respect to human worthiness, confers the glorious gift. Faith, with an empty hand and without any pretence to personal desert, receives the heavenly blessing. Without the grace or power to believe, no man ever did or can believe; but with that power the act of faith is a man's own. God never believes for any man, no more than He repents for him. The penitent, through this grace enabling him, believes for himself; nor does he believe necessarily or impulsively when he has that power. The power to believe may be present long before it is exercised, else why the solemn warnings which we meet everywhere in the word of God and threatenings against those who do not believe? This is the true state of the case: God gives the power, man uses the power thus given, and brings glory to God. Without the power no man can believe; with it any man may.

IV. **Salvation, being unmeritorious, excludes all human boasting.**—"Not of works, lest any man should boast" (ver. 9). Neither salvation nor the faith that brings it is the result of human ingenuity and effort. The grand moral results brought about by saving faith are so extraordinary, and so high above the plane of the loftiest and most gigantic human endeavours, that if man could produce them by his own unaided powers he would have cause indeed for the most extravagant boasting, and he would be in danger of generating a pride which in its uncontrollable excess would work his irretrievable ruin. The least shadow of a ground for pride is however excluded. God protects both Himself and man by the freeness and simplicity of the offer of salvation. It is the complaint of intellectual pride that the reception of the gospel is impossible because it demands a humiliation and self-emptying that degrade and shackle intellectual freedom. Such an objection is a libel on the gospel. It humbles in order to exalt; it binds its claims upon us to lift us to a higher freedom. So completely is salvation a divine act, that the man who refuses to accept it on God's terms must perish. There is no other way.

V. **The glory of divine grace in salvation will be increasingly demonstrated in the future.**—"That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace" (ver. 7). The most valuable function of history is not that which deals with the rise and fall of empires, the brutal ravages of war, the biographies of kings, statesmen, and philosophers, but that which treats upon the social and moral condition of the people and the influence of religion in the development of individual and national character. The true history of the world is the history of God's dealings with it. The ages of the past have been a revelation of God; the ages to come will be an enlargement of that revelation, and its most conspicuous feature will be an ever new development of the riches of divine grace in the redemption of the human race. In all successive ages of the world we are authorised to declare that sinners shall be saved only as they repent of their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lessons.—*Salvation*—1. *Is a revelation of what God does for man.* 2. *Is absolutely necessary for each.* 3. *Should be earnestly sought by all.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 4-7. *The Great Change effected in Man by the Gospel.*

I. **The happy change which the gospel made in the Ephesians.**—A

change not peculiar to them, but common to all sincere believers.

1. *God hath quickened us.*—Made us alive with Christ. (1) True Christians are alive; they have spiritual senses and appetites. (2) Spiritual motions. (3) Spiritual pleasures. (4) Spiritual powers. The spiritual life comes through Christ, and is conformed to Him.

2. *God hath raised us up together with Christ* (ver. 6).—His resurrection is a proof and pattern of that of believers.

3. *God hath made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ.*—His entrance into heaven is a proof of the final salvation of believers. He sits there for them, to take care of their interests, and in due time will bring them to sit where He is.

II. **Contemplate the mercy of God in this great change.**—"God, who is rich in mercy" (ver. 4). The mercies of God are rich in extent, in number, in respect of constancy, in variety, in value. "The great love wherewith He loved us." He first loved us. His love shines brighter when we consider what a being He is. He is infinitely above us. He is self-sufficient. The gospel gives us the most exalted conceptions of God's character.

III. **The general purpose of God's particular mercy to the Ephesians** (ver. 7).—God's mercy in reclaiming one transgressor may operate to the salvation of thousands in ages to come. The gospel dispensation was intended to serve some useful purposes among other intelligences. Not only God's gracious dispensation to fallen men, but also His righteous severity toward irreclaimable offenders, is designed for extensive beneficial influence.—*Lathrop.*

Vers. 4, 5. *The State of Grace.*

1. *Salvation originates in the love of God.*

2. *That it consists in emancipation from evil.*—"Quickened us together with Christ;" that is, gave life. The love and mercy of God were shown in this—not that He saved from penalty, but from sin. What we want is life, more life, spiritual life, to know in all things the truth of God and to speak it, to feel in all things the will of God and do it.

3. *The next word to explain is grace.*—It stands opposed to nature and to law. Whenever nature means the dominion of our lower appetites, then nature stands opposed to grace. Grace stands opposed to law. All that law can do is to manifest sin, just as the dam thrown across the river shows its strength; law can arrest sometimes the commission of sin, but never the inward principle. Therefore God has provided another remedy, "Sin shall not have dominion over you," because ye are under grace.

4. *Paul states salvation here as a fact.*—"By grace ye *are* saved." There are two systems. The one begins with nature, the other with grace: the one treats all Christians as if they were the children of the devil, and tells them that they may perhaps become the children of God; the other declares that the incarnation of Christ is a fact, a universal fact, proclaiming that all the world are called to be the children of the Most High. Let us believe in grace instead of beginning with nature.—*F. W. Robertson.*

Vers. 4-6. *The Believer exalted together with Jesus Christ.*

I. **The believer is assured he is raised up with Christ by the proofs which assure him of the exaltation of Christ.**—These proofs, irresistible as they are, do not produce impressions so lively as they ought. 1. From the abuse of a distinction between mathematical evidence and moral evidence. 2. Because the mind is under the influence of a prejudice, unworthy of a real philosopher, that moral evidence changes its nature according to the nature of the things to which it is applied. 3. Because the necessary discrimination has not been employed in the selection of those proofs on which some have pretended to establish it. 4. Because we are too deeply affected

by our inability to resolve certain questions which the enemies of religion are accustomed to put on some circumstances relative to that event. 5. Because we suffer ourselves to be intimidated more than we ought by the comparison instituted between them and certain popular rumours which have no better support than the caprice of the persons who propagate them. 6. Because they are not sufficiently known.

II. **The means supplied to satisfy the believer that he is fulfilling the conditions under which he may promise himself that he shall become a partaker of Christ's exaltation.**—Though this knowledge be difficult, it is by no means impossible of attainment. He employs two methods principally to arrive at it: 1. He studies his own heart; 2. He shrinks not from the inspection of the eyes of others.

III. **The believer is raised up with Christ by the foretastes which he enjoys on earth of his participation in the exaltation of Christ.**—This experience is realised by the believer. 1. When shutting the door of his closet and excluding the world from his heart, he is admitted to communion and fellowship with Deity in retirement and silence. 2. When Providence calls him to undergo some severe trial. 3. When he has been enabled to make some noble and generous sacrifice. 4. When celebrating the sacred mysteries of redeeming love. 5. Finally, in the hour of conflict with the king of terrors.—*Saurin.*

Ver. 5. *Justification by Faith.*

I. We hold **that we are justified by faith,** that is, by believing, and that unless we are justified we cannot be saved. Of all men whoever believed this, those who gave us the Church catechism believed it most strongly. Believing really what they taught, they believed that children were justified. For if a child is not justified in being a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, what is he justified in being? They knew that the children could only keep in this just, right, and proper state by trusting in God and looking up to Him daily in faith and love and obedience.

II. **These old reformers were practical men and took the practical way.**—They knew the old proverb, "A man need not be a builder to live in a house." At least they acted on it; and instead of trying to make the children understand what faith was made up of, they tried to make them live in faith itself. Instead of puzzling and fretting the children's minds with any of the controversies then going on between Papists and Protestants, or afterwards between Calvinists and Arminians, they taught the children simply about God, who He was, and what He had done for them and all mankind, that so they might learn to love Him, look up to Him in faith, and trust utterly to Him, and so remain justified and right, saved and safe for ever. By doing which they showed that they knew more about faith and about God than if they had written books on books of doctrinal arguments.

III. **The Church catechism, where it is really and honestly taught, gives the children an honest, frank, sober, English temper of mind which no other training I have seen gives.**—I warn you frankly that, if you expect to make the average of English children good children on any other ground than the Church catechism takes, you will fail. If it be not enough for your children to know all the articles of the Apostles' Creed, and on the strength thereof to trust God utterly and so be justified and saved, then they must go elsewhere, for I have nothing more to offer them, and trust in God that I never shall have.—*C. Kingsley.*

Ver. 8. *Salvation by Faith.*

I. **What faith it is through which we are saved.**—1. It is not barely the faith of a heathen. 2. Nor is it the faith of a devil, though this goes much further than that of a heathen. 3. It is not barely that the apostles had

while Christ was yet upon earth. 4. In general it is faith in Christ: Christ and God through Christ are the proper objects of it. 5. It is not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ, but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ, a trust in the merits of His life, death, and resurrection, a recumbency upon Him as our atonement and our life, as given for us and living in us, and in consequence hereof, a closing with Him and cleaving to Him as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, or, in one word, our salvation.

II. **What is the salvation which is through faith?**—1. It is a present salvation. 2. A salvation from sin. 3. From the guilt of all past sin. 4. From fear. 5. From the power of sin. 6. A salvation often expressed in the word "justification," which taken in the largest sense implies a deliverance from guilt and punishment by the atonement of Christ actually applied to the soul of the sinner now believing on Him, and a deliverance from the power of sin, through Christ formed in his heart.

III. **The importance of the doctrine.**—Never was the maintaining this doctrine more seasonable than it is at this day. Nothing but this can effectually prevent the increase of the Romish delusion among us. It is endless to attack one by one all the errors of that Church. But salvation by faith strikes at the root, and all fall at once where this is established.—*Wesley.*

Vers. 8, 9. *Our Salvation is of Grace.*

I. **Consider how we are saved through faith.**—1. Without faith we cannot be saved. 2. All who have faith will be saved.

II. **What place and influence works have in our salvation.**—1. In what sense our salvation is not of works. (1) We are not saved by works considered as a fulfilment of the original law of nature. (2) We are not saved by virtue of any works done before faith in Christ, for none of these are properly good. 2. There is a sense in which good works are of absolute necessity to salvation. (1) They are necessary as being radically included in that faith by which we are saved. (2) A temper disposing us to good works is a necessary qualification for heaven. (3) Works are necessary as evidences of our faith in Christ and of our title to heaven. (4) Good works essentially belong to religion. (5) Works are necessary to adorn our professions and honour our religion before men. (6) By them we are to be judged in the great day of the Lord.

III. **The necessity of works does not diminish the grace of God in our salvation nor afford us any pretence for boasting.**—1. Humility essentially belongs to the Christian temper. 2. The mighty preparation God has made for our recovery teaches that the human race is of great importance in the scale of rational beings and in the scheme of God's universal government. 3. It infinitely concerns us to comply with the proposals of the gospel. 4. Let no man flatter himself that he is in a state of salvation as long as he lives in the neglect of good works. 5. Let us be careful that we mistake not the nature of good works.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 8. *True Justifying Faith is not of Ourselves.*—It is through grace that we believe in the grace of God. God's grace and love, the source; faith, the instrument; both His gift. The origin of our coming to Christ is of God. Justifying faith, not human assent, but a powerful, vivifying thing which immediately works a change in the man and makes him a new creature, and leads him to an entirely new and altered mode of life and conduct. Hence justifying faith is a divine work.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 10.

The Christian Life a Divine Creation.

I. **The true Christian a specimen of the divine handiwork.**—"We are His workmanship." So far is man from being the author of his own salvation, or from procuring salvation for the sake of any works of his own, that not only was his first creation as a man the work of God, but his new spiritual creation is wholly the result of divine power. Man, in the marvellous mechanism of his body, and in his unique mental and spiritual endowments, is the noblest work of God. He is the lord and high priest of nature, and has such dominion over it as to be able to combine and utilise its forces. But the creation of the new spiritual man in Christ Jesus is a far grander work, and a more perfect and exalted specimen of the divine handiwork. It is a nearer approach to a more perfect image of the divine character and perfections. As the best work of the most gifted genius is a reflection of his loftiest powers, so the new spiritual creation is a fuller revelation of the infinite resources of the divine Worker.

II. **The Christian life is eminently practical.**—"Created in Christ Jesus for good works" (R.V.). The apostle never calls the works of the law good works. We are not saved by, but created unto, good works. Works do not justify, but the justified man works, and thus demonstrates the reality of his new creation. "I should have thought mowers very idle people," said John Newton, "but they work while they whet the scythe. Now devotedness to God, whether it mows or whets the scythe, still goes on with the work. A Christian should never plead spirituality for being a sloven; if he be but a shoe-cleaner, he should be the best in the parish."

III. **The opportunities and motives for Christian usefulness are divinely provided.**—"Which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Every man has his daily work of body or mind appointed him. There is not a moment without a duty. Each one has a vineyard; let him see that he till it, and not say, "No man hath hired us." "The situation," says Carlyle, "that has not its duty, its ideal, was never yet occupied by man. Yes, here in this poor, miserable, hampered, despicable Actual wherein thou even now standest, here or nowhere is thy ideal. Work it out therefrom, and working, believe, live, and be free." There is no romance in a minister's proposing and hoping to forward a great moral revolution on the earth, for the religion he is appointed to preach was intended and is adapted to work deeply and widely and to change the face of society. Christianity was not ushered into the world with such a stupendous preparation, it was not foreshown through so many ages by enraptured prophets, it was not proclaimed so joyfully through the songs of angels, it was not preached by such holy lips and sealed by such precious blood, to be only a pageant, a form, a sound, a show. Oh no! It has come from heaven, with heaven's life and power—come to make all things new, to make the wilderness glad, and the desert blossom as the rose, to break the stony heart, to set free the guilt-burdened and earth-bound spirit, and to present it faultless before God's glory with exceeding joy.

Lessons.—1. *Christianity is not a creed, but a life.* 2. *The Christian life has a manifest divine origin.* 3. *The Christian life must be practically developed in harmony with the divine mind.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSE.

Ver. 10. *Interruptions in our Work, and the Way to deal with Them.*—In proportion to the seriousness with which a Christian does his work will be his sensitiveness to interruptions, and this sensitiveness is apt to disturb

his peace. The remedy is a closer study of the mind that was in Christ, as that mind transpires in His recorded conduct. The point in the life of our Lord is the apparent want of what may be called method or plan. His good works were not in pursuance of some scheme laid down by Himself, but such as entered into God's scheme for Him, such as the Father had prepared for Him to walk in.

I. **Notice His discourses both in their occasions and their contexture.**—1. His discourses often take their rise from some object which is thrown across His path in nature, from some occurrence which takes place under His eyes, or from some question which is put to Him. 2. The contexture of His discourses are not systematic in the usual sense of the word. There is the intellectual method, and the method of a full mind and loving heart. The only plan observable in our Lord's discourses is that of a loving heart pouring itself out as occasion serves for the edification of mankind.

II. **Study the life of Christ.**—The absence of mere human plan, or rather strict faithfulness to the plan of God as hourly developed by the movements of His providence, characterises the life of our Lord even more than His discourses. Illustrated from Matthew ix. God has a plan of life for each one of us, and occasions of doing or receiving good are mapped out for each in His eternal counsels. Little incidents, as well as great crises of life, are under the control of God's providence. Events have a voice for us if we will listen to it. Let us view our interruptions as part of God's plan for us. We may receive good, even when we cannot do good. It is self-will which weds us to our own plans and makes us resent interference with them. In the providence of God there seems to be entanglements, perplexities, interruptions, confusions, contradictions, without end; but you may be sure there is one ruling thought, one master-design, to which all these are subordinate. Be not clamorous for another or more dignified character than that which is allotted to you. Be it your sole aim to conspire with the Author, and to subserve His grand and wise conception. Thus shall you find peace in submitting yourself to the wisdom which is of God.—*E. M. Goulburn.*

The New Spiritual Creation.—God has kindled in us a new spiritual life by baptism and the influence of the Holy Spirit connected therewith. He has laid the foundation of recreating us into His image. He has made us other men in a far more essential sense than it was once said to Saul—"Thou shalt be turned into another man." What is the principal fruit and end of this new creation? A living hope. Its object is not only our future resurrection, but the whole plenitude of the salvation still to be revealed by Jesus Christ, even until the new heavens and the new earth shall appear. Birth implies life; so is it with the hope of believers, which is the very opposite of the vain, lost, and powerless hope of the worldly-minded. It is powerful, and quickens the heart by comforting, strengthening, and encouraging it, by making it joyous and cheerful in God. Its quickening influence enters even into our physical life. Hope is not only the fulfilment of the new life created in regeneration, but also the innermost kernel of the same.—*Weiss.*

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

The Forlorn State of the Gentile World.

I. **Outcast.**—"Gentiles, . . . called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision" (ver. 11). The circumcised Jew regarded himself as a special favourite of Heaven, and superior to all other men. He hardly felt himself a member of the human family. He was accustomed to speak of himself as chosen of God, and as holy and clean; whilst the Gentiles were treated as sinners, dogs,

polluted, unclean, outcast, and God-abandoned. Between Jew and Gentile there was constant hatred and antagonism, as there is now between the Church and the world. On the one hand, the old religion, with its time-honoured teachings, its ancient traditions, the Church of the Fathers, the guardian of revelation, the depositary of the faith, the staunchness that tends to degenerate into bigotry—here is the Jew. On the other hand, the intellectual searchings, the political aspirations and mechanical contrivings—science, art, literature, commerce, sociology, the liberty which threatens to luxuriate into licence—here is the Gentile. Ever and again the old feud breaks out. Ever and again there is a crack and a rent. The gulf widens, and disruption is threatened. The majority is outside the circle of the Church.

II. **Christless.**—"That at that time ye were without Christ." The promises of a coming Deliverer were made to the Jews, and they were slow to see that any other people had any right to the blessings of the Messiah, or that it was their duty to instruct the world concerning Him. They drew a hard line between the sons of Abraham and the dogs of Greeks. They erected a middle wall of partition, thrusting out the Gentiles into the outer court. Christ has broken down the barrier. On the area thus cleared He has erected a larger, loftier, holier temple, a universal brotherhood which acknowledges no preferences and knows no distinctions. In Christ Jesus now there is neither Jew nor Greek, but Christ is all and in all—a vivid contrast to the Christlessness of a former age.

III. **Hopeless.**—"Being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope" (ver. 12). Where there is no promise there is no hope. Cut off from any knowledge of the promises revealed to the Jews, the Gentiles were sinking into despair.

IV. **Godless.**—"Without God in the world." With numberless deities the Gentiles had no God. They had everything else, but this one thing they lacked—knowledge of God their Father; and without this all their magnificent gifts could not satisfy, could not save, them. Culture and civilisation, arts and commerce, institutions and laws, no nation can afford to undervalue these; but not only do all these things soon fade, but the people themselves fall into corruption and decay, if the Breath of Life is wanting. As with nations, so is it with individuals. Man cannot with impunity ignore or deny the Father of earth and heaven.

Lessons.—1. *Man left to himself inevitably degenerates.* 2. *When man abandons God his case is desperate.* 3. *The rescue of man from utter ruin is an act of divine mercy.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 11, 12. *The Condition of the Ephesians before their Conversion descriptive of the State of Sinners under the Gospel.*

I. **They were in time past Gentiles in the flesh.**—He admonishes them not to forget the dismal state of heathenism out of which they had been called, and often to reflect upon it, that they might ever maintain a sense of their unworthiness and awaken thankful and admiring apprehensions of that grace which had wrought in them so glorious a change.

II. **Reminds them of the contempt with which they had been treated by the Jews.**—The Jews, instead of improving the distinction of their circumcision to gratitude and obedience, perverted it to pride, self-confidence, and contempt of mankind. They not only excluded other nations from the benefit of religious communion, but even denied them the common offices of humanity. One of their greatest objections to the gospel was that it offered salvation to the Gentiles.

III. **They were without Christ.**—

To the Jews were chiefly confined the discoveries which God made of a Saviour to come. From them in their captivities and dispersions the Gentiles obtained the knowledge they had of this glorious Person. This knowledge was imperfect, mixed with error and uncertainty, and at best extended only to a few. The Gentiles, contemplating the Messiah as a temporal prince, regarded His appearance as a calamity rather than a blessing.

IV. **They were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.**—To the forms of worship instituted in the Mosaic law none was admitted but Jews and such as were proselyted to the Jewish religion. All uncircumcised heathens were excluded as aliens.

V. **They were strangers from the covenants of promise.**—The discovery of the covenants of promise until the Saviour came was almost wholly confined to the Jews. How unhappy was the condition of the Gentile world in the dark, benighted ages which preceded the gospel!

VI. **They had no clear hope of a future existence.**—Many of them scarcely believed or thought of a life beyond this. They had no apprehension, hardly the idea of a restoration of the body. Those who believed in a future state had but obscure and some of them very absurd conceptions of it. Still more ignorant were they of the qualifications necessary for happiness after death.

VII. **They were atheists in a world in which God was manifest.**—The heathens generally had some apprehension of a Deity; but they were without a knowledge of the one true God and without a just idea of His character. There are more atheists in the world than profess themselves such. Many who profess to know God in works deny Him.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 12. *Hopeless and Godless.*—The soul that has no God has no hope. The character of the God we love and worship will determine the character of our hope. 1. The heathen religion was the *seeking* religion. Their search arose out of a deeply felt want. They felt the need of something they did not possess; and the finest intellects the world has ever known bravely and anxiously devoted all their colossal powers to the task of fathoming the mysteries of life. The hope of discovery buoyed them up and urged them onwards; but their united endeavours brought them only to the borderland of the unseen and the unknown, where they caught but glimmerings of a truth that ever receded into the great beyond. "The world by wisdom knew not God," and therefore had no hope. 2. The Hebrew religion was the *hoping* religion. Favoured with a revelation of the only true God, their hope expanded with every advancing step of the progressive revelation. Their hope was based on *faith*, as all true hope must be—faith in the promises of God. They had the promise of a *Deliverer* whose wisdom should excel that of Moses and Solomon, and whose power should surpass that of Joshua and of his heroic successors in the most brilliant period of their military career; and, through the centuries of prosperity and decline, of scattering and captivity, and amid unparalleled sufferings which would have extinguished any other nation, hope fastened and fed upon the promises till the true Messiah came, whom St. Paul justly described as "the Hope of Israel, the Hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers." 3. The *Christian* religion is the *complement* and *perfection* of all previously existing systems; it is the grand realisation of what the heathen sought and the Hebrew hoped for. It is in Jesus we have the clearest, fullest, and most authoritative revelation of God, and it is in Him, and in Him alone, that the loftiest hope of man finds its restful and all-sufficient realisation. The apostle Paul refers to Jesus specifically as our Hope—"Our Lord Jesus Christ, which is our Hope" (1 Tim. i. 1). 4. In the light of this great and indubitable truth the

words of our text may be clearly and unmistakably interpreted, and they assume a terrible significance. *To be without Christ is to be without God and without hope.* (1) Hope is not simply *expectation.* We expect many things we do not hope for. In the natural course of things we expect difficulties, we expect opposition and misrepresentation—"black wounding calumny the whitest virtue strikes"—we expect affliction and suffering, we expect the infirmities and disabilities of age; but we are none of us so fond of trouble for trouble's sake as to hope for any of these things. (2) Hope is not simply *desire.* Our desires are as thick and plentiful as apple blossoms, few of which ever ripen into the fruit they promise. We desire uninterrupted health, we desire wealth—the most dangerous and disappointing of all human wishes—we desire pleasure, success in life, and the realisation of the most ambitious dreams; but we have no reasonable ground for hoping that all our desires will ever be attained. (3) Hope is the *expectation of the desirable,* and it must have a foundation on which the expectation rests and an object to which the desire can rise. The foundation of hope is Christ, and the object of hope is to live with Him in eternal glory. To be without hope and without God does not mean that hope and God do not exist. The world is full of both; they are among you, they surround you, the very air vibrates with the ever-active presence of these grand realities; but they are as though they did not exist for you unless you know and feel they do exist within you. (4) Hope *presupposes faith*; they cannot exist apart. Faith discovers "the only foundation which is laid, which is Christ Jesus," fastens the soul to and settles it on this foundation, and faith and hope rouse all the activities of the soul to build on this foundation a superstructure which shall grow in solidity, in symmetry, and in beauty, until it becomes a perfect marvel of moral architecture, richly ornamented with the most delicate tracery and shimmering and flashing with the resplendent glory of God. (5) *Hope is the balloon of the soul,* soaring majestically into the heavens, scanning scenes of beauty and grandeur never beheld by our earth-bound senses, and faithfully reporting to the soul the state of affairs in the skies; but it is a *captive balloon,* and the connecting cords are firmly held in the hand of faith. The loftiest flights and the swing of what might seem the most eccentric gyrations of hope are held in check by the friendly, the sympathetic, but unswerving grasp of faith. "My dear Hope," Faith says, "it is very nice for you to be up there, basking in the cloudless sunshine and drinking in the melody of the ascending lark as it ripples up the heights; and I like you to be there. I could never get there myself; and you tell me of things I should never otherwise know, and they do me good. But, remember, I cannot let you go. We are linked together in the sacred bonds of a holy wedlock. We are necessary to each other, and cannot do without each other. If you were to break away from me, you would vanish like vapour into space, and I should be left forlorn and powerless" And Hope replies: "I know it, my dear Faith. Divorce would be fatal to us both, and our union is too sweet and precious ever to dream of separation. I live in these upper regions purely for your sake. You know I have cheered you up many a time and will do so again. My joy is to brighten your life of toil and conflict down there. When the soul has done with you it will have done with me, and when my work is finished I shall be content to die." Thus faith and hope are essentially united, and both are wedded together by the soul's living union with Christ. (6) A false hope is really *no hope.* It rests on no solid foundation; it is not justified by sound reason. It is but the blue light of a frantic conjecture generated amid the restless tumults of a soul in the last stages of despair. At the best a

false hope is but a beautiful dream spun from the gossamer threads of a busy and excited fancy, a dream *of what we wish might be,* and, like all other dreams having no substantial basis, it dissolves into space under the first touch of reality. A false hope lures its victims on to destruction, as the flickering lights of the marsh gases seduce the belated traveller into the dismal swamps from which there is no release.

A State of Sin a State of Ungodliness.—1. Men do not recognise the existence of God. 2. They do not acknowledge His moral government. 3. They do not seek His favour as their chief good. 4. They do not delight in His communion. 5. They do not anticipate their final reckoning with Him. 6. They do not accept His own disclosures concerning the attributes of His nature and the principles of His administration.—*G. Brooks.*

Man without God.—He is like a ship tossed about on a stormy sea without chart or compass. The ship drifts as the waves carry it. The night is dark. The pilot knows not which way to steer. He may be close to rocks and quicksands. Perhaps a flash of lightning falls on a rock, or he hears the waves breaking over it. But how shall he escape, or how prepare to meet the danger? Shall he trust in providence? What providence has he to trust in? Poor man! He is without God. Shall he throw out an anchor? But he has no anchor. He wants the best and only safe anchor, hope—the anchor of the soul. Such is the state of man when he is far off, without a God to trust in, without hope to comfort and support him. But give the man a true and lively faith in Christ, tell him of a merciful and loving Father who careth for us and would have us cast all our care upon Him, show him that hope which is firm to the end, and straightway you make a happy man of him. You give him a course to steer, a chart and compass to guide him, an anchor which will enable him to withstand the buffeting of every storm. You insure him against shipwreck, and you assure him of a blessed haven where at length he will arrive and be at rest.—*A. W. Hare.*

Practical Atheism.—If it had been without friends, without shelter, without food, that would have made a gloomy sound; but without God! That there should be men who can survey the creation with a scientific enlargement of intelligence and then say there is no God is one of the most hideous phenomena in the world.

I. **The text is applicable to those who have no solemn recognition of God's all-disposing government and providence**—who have no thought of the course of things but just as going on, going on some way or other, just as it can be; to whom it appears abandoned to a strife and competition of various mortal powers, or surrendered to something they call general laws, and these blended with chance.

II. **Is a description of all those who are forming or pursuing their scheme of life and happiness independent of Him.**—They do not consult His counsel or will as to what that scheme should be in its ends or means. His favour, His blessing are not absolutely indispensable. We can be happy leaving Him out of the account.

III. **Is a description of those who have but a slight sense of universal accountableness to God as the supreme authority**—who have not a conscience constantly looking and listening to Him and testifying for Him. This insensibility of accountableness exists almost entire—a stupefaction of conscience—in very many minds. In others there is a disturbed yet inefficacious feeling. To be thus with God is in the most emphatical sense to be without Him—without Him as a friend, approver, and patron. Each thought of Him tells the soul who it is that it is without, and who it is that in a very fearful sense it never can be without.

IV. **The description belongs to that state of mind in which there is no communion with Him** maintained or even sought with cordial aspiration. How lamentable to be thus without God! Consider it in one single view only, that of the *loneliness* of a human soul in this destitution.

V. **A description of the state of mind in which there is no habitual anticipation of the great event of going at length into the presence of God**; in which there is an absence of the thought of being with Him in another world, of being with Him in judgment, and whether to be with Him for ever.

VI. **A description of those who, professing to retain God in their thoughts, frame the religion in which they are to acknowledge Him according to their own speculation and fancy.** —Will the Almighty acknowledge your feigned God for Himself, and admit your religion as equivalent to that which He has declared and defined? If He should not, you are without God in the world. Let us implore Him not to permit our spirits to be detached from Him, abandoned, exposed, and lost; not to let them be trying to feed their immortal fires on transitory sustenance, but to attract them, exalt them, and hold them in His communion for ever.—*John Foster.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13—18.

Christ the Great Peacemaker.

I. **His mission on earth was one of peace.**—"And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh" (ver. 17). His advent was heralded by the angelic song, "Peace on earth, and goodwill toward men." The world is racked with moral discord; He is constantly striving to introduce the music of a heavenly harmony. It is distracted with war; He is propagating principles that will by-and-by make war impossible. The work of the peacemaker is Christ-like. Shenkyn, one of whose anomalies was that with all his burning passions he was a notorious peacemaker, and had means of pouring oil upon troubled waters, once upon a time was deputed to try his well-known skill upon a Church whose strife of tongues had become quite notorious. He reluctantly complied, and attended a meeting which soon proved to his satisfaction that the people were possessed by a demon that could not easily be expelled. The peacemaker got up, staff in hand, paced the little chapel, and with his spirit deeply moved, cried out, "Lord, is this Thy spouse?" Faster and faster he walked, thumping his huge stick on the floor, and still crying out, "Lord, is this Thy spouse? Slay her!" Then there came, as it were from another, a response, "No, I will not." "Sell her, then!" "No, I will not." "Deny her, then!" Still the answer came, "I will not." Then he lifted up his voice, saying, "I have bought her with My precious blood; how can I give her up? How can I forsake her?" The strife had now ceased, and the people looked on with amazement, crying out for pardon.

II. **He made peace between man and man.**—"For He is our peace, who hath made both one; . . . to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace" (vers. 14, 15). The hostility of Jew and Gentile was conquered; the new spritual nature created in both formed a bond of brotherhood and harmony. The Jew no longer despised the Gentile; the Gentile no longer hated and persecuted the Jew. Where the Christian spirit predominates personal quarrels are speedily adjusted.

III. **He made peace between man and God.**—"That He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross" (ver. 16). The enmity of man against God is disarmed and conquered by the voluntary suffering of Jesus in man's stead, and by His thus opening up the way of reconciliation of man with God. God

can now be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. The violated law is now atoned for, and the violater may obtain forgiveness and regain the forfeited favour of the offended God. There is peace only through forgiveness.

IV. **His death removed the great barrier to peace.**—This paragraph is very rich and suggestive in the phrases used to explain this blessed result: "Ye are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (ver. 13). "By the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (ver. 16). "Hath broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity" (vers. 14, 15). It is not the calm, silent, featureless, helpless, forceless *peace of death*, but a living, active, aggressive, ever-conquering peace. The death was the result of agonising struggle and intense suffering, and the peace purchased is a powerfully operating influence in the believing soul.

> "A peace is of the nature of a conquest;
> For there both parties nobly are subdued,
> And neither party losers."
>
> *Shakespeare.*

V. **True peace is realised only in Christ.**—"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (ver. 13). "For He is our peace" (ver. 14). "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (ver. 18). "Christ takes us by the hand, and eads us to the Father." Men seek peace in the excitements of worldly pleasures, or in the pursuit of ambitious aims, but in vain. They only stimulate the malady they seek to cure. Christ is the restful centre of the universe, and the sin-tossed soul gains peace only as it converges towards Him. The efforts of men to find rest independent of Christ only reveal their need of Him, and it is a mercy when this revelation and consciousness of need does not come too late.

Lessons.—1. *Sin is the instigator of quarrels and strife.* 2. *Only as sin is conquered does peace become possible.* 3. *Christ introduces peace by abolishing sin.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 13-18. *Nearness to God.*

I. **They were brought into the Church of God, and admitted to equal privileges with His ancient people the Jews.**

II. **They were brought near to God as they were admitted to enjoy the gospel, which is a dispensation of grace and peace.**

III. **They were brought near to God by the renovation of their souls after His image.**

IV. **This nearness to God implies a state of peace with Him.**

V. **Another circumstance of the nearness is access to God in prayer.**

VI. **Another is the presence of His Holy Spirit.**—Let us be afraid of everything that tends to draw us away from God, and love everything which brings us nearer to Him. Let us seek Him with our whole heart, preserve daily communion with Him, choose His favour as our happiness, His service as our employment, His word as our guide, His ordinances as our refreshment, His house as the gate of heaven, and heaven as our eternal home.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 13. *Our State by Nature and by Grace.*

I. **Our state by nature.**—The distance from God here spoken of is not a local distance, neither is it that which separates us from Him as an infinite Being. 1. It is legal. Banished by a righteous sentence and by a sense of guilt and unworthiness. 2. It is moral. Estrangement. Absence of sympathy. Want of harmony. 3. In both these respects it is ever-widening. 4. It is miserable and dangerous.

II. **Our state by grace.**—1. The legal barriers are removed by the

blood of Christ shed on the cross. 2. The moral alienation is removed by the blood of Christ as applied to the believer by the Holy Spirit. 3. The nearness to God thus effected is a valuable privilege. It includes reconciliation, friendship, communion. Sinner, apply now to be made nigh. Believer, remember thy obligations.—*G. Brooks.*

Vers. 14, 15. *Death a Peacemaker.*—The struggle between the Northern and Southern States of America closed for ever at the funeral of General Grant. The armies of rebellion surrendered twenty years before; but the solemn and memorable pageant at the tomb of the great Union soldier, where the leading generals of the living Union and of the dead Confederacy stood shoulder to shoulder and mingled their tears in a common grief—this historical event marked the absolute conclusion of sectional animosity in America.

Ver. 16. *The Power of the Gospel to dissolve the Enmity of the Human Heart against God.*—1. The goodness of God destroys the enmity of the human mind. When every other argument fails, this, if perceived by the eye of faith, finds its powerful and persuasive way through every barrier of resistance. Try to approach the heart of man by the instruments of terror and of authority, and it will disdainfully repel you. There is not one of you skilled in the management of human nature who does not perceive that, though this may be a way of working on the other principles of our constitution—of working on the fears of man, or on his sense of interest—this is not the way of gaining by a single hair-breadth on the attachments of his heart. Such a way may force, or it may terrify, but it never, never can endear; and after all the threatening array of such an influence as this is brought to bear upon man, there is not one particle of service it can extort from him but what is all rendered in the spirit of a painful and reluctant bondage. Now this is not the service which prepares for heaven. This is not the service which assimilates men to angels. This is not the obedience of those glorified spirits, whose every affection harmonises with their every performance, and the very essence of whose piety consists of delight in God and the love they bear to Him. To bring up man to such an obedience as this, his heart behoved to be approached in a peculiar way; and no such way is to be found but within the limits of the Christian revelation. There alone you see God, without injury to His other attributes, plying the heart of man with the irresistible argument of kindness. There alone do you see the great Lord of heaven and of earth, setting Himself forth to the most worthless and the most wandering of His children—putting forth His own hand to the work of healing the breach which sin had made between them—telling them that His word could not be mocked, and His justice could not be defied and trampled on, and that it was not possible for His perfections to receive the slightest taint in the eyes of the creation He had thrown around them; but that all this was provided for, and not a single creature within the compass of the universe He had formed could now say that forgiveness to man was degrading to the authority of God, and that by the very act of atonement, which poured a glory over all the high attributes of His character, His mercy might now burst forth without limit and without control upon a guilty world, and the broad flag of invitation be unfurled in the sight of all its families. 2. Let the sinner, then, look to God through the medium of such a revelation, and the sight which meets him there may well tame the obstinacy of that heart which had wrapped itself up in impenetrable hardness against the force of every other consideration. Now that the storm of the Almighty's wrath has been discharged upon Him

who bore the burden of the world's atonement, He has turned His throne of glory into a throne of grace, and cleared away from the pavilion of His residence all the darkness which encompassed it. The God who dwelleth there is God in Christ; and the voice He sends from it to this dark and rebellious province of His mighty empire is a voice of the most beseeching tenderness. Goodwill to men is the announcement with which His messengers come fraught to a guilty world; and, since the moment in which it burst upon mortal ears from the peaceful canopy of heaven, may the ministers of salvation take it up, and go round with it among all the tribes and individuals of the species. Such is the real aspect of God towards you. He cannot bear that His alienated children should be finally and everlastingly away from Him. He feels for you all the longing of a parent bereaved of his offspring. To woo you back again unto Himself He scatters among you the largest and the most liberal assurances, and with a tone of imploring tenderness does He say to one and all of you, "Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die?" He has no pleasure in your death. He does not wish to glorify Himself by the destruction of any one of you. "Look to Me, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved," is the wide and generous announcement by which He would recall, from the outermost limits of His sinful creation, the most worthless and polluted of those who have wandered away from Him. 3. Now give us a man who perceives, with the eye of his mind, the reality of all this, and you give us a man in possession of the principle of faith. Give us a man in possession of this faith; and his heart, shielded as it were against the terrors of a menacing Deity, is softened and subdued, and resigns its every affection at the moving spectacle of a beseeching Deity; and thus it is that faith manifests the attribute which the Bible assigns to it, of working by love. Give us a man in possession of this love; and, animated as he is with the living principle of that obedience, where the willing and delighted consent of the inner man goes along with the performance of the outer man, his love manifests the attribute which the Bible assigns to it when it says, "This is the love of God, that ye keep His commandments." And thus it is, amid the fruitfulness of every other expedient, when power threatened to crush the heart which it could not soften—when authority lifted its voice, and laid on man an enactment of love which it could not carry—when terror shot its arrows, and they dropped ineffectual from that citadel of the human affections, which stood proof against the impression of every one of them—when wrath mustered up its appalling severities, and filled that bosom with despair which it could not fill with the warmth of a confiding attachment—then the kindness of an inviting God was brought to bear on the heart of man, and got an opening through all its mysterious avenues. Goodness did what the nakedness of power could not do. It found its way through all intricacies of the human constitution, and there, depositing the right principle of repentance, did it establish the alone effectual security for the right purposes and the right fruits of repentance.—*Dr. T. Chalmers.*

Ver. 18. *The Privilege of Access to the Father.*—In the Temple service of the Jews all did not enjoy equal privileges. The court of the Gentiles was outside that of the Jews and separated from it by "a marble screen or enclosure three cubits in height, beautifully ornamented with carving, but bearing inscriptions, in Greek and Roman characters, forbidding any Gentile to pass within its boundary." Such restricted access to God the new dispensation was designed to abolish. The middle wall of partition is now broken down, and through Christ we, both Jews and Gentiles—all mankind—have equal access by one Spirit unto the Father. Observe:—

I. **The privilege of access unto the Father.**—That God is the proper object of worship is implied in our text, and more explicitly declared in other portions of the sacred writings. According to the nature of the blessings desired, prayer may be addressed to any one of the three Persons in the Godhead; but the Bible teaches that prayer generally is to be presented to the Father through Christ and by the Holy Spirit. And so appropriate are the offices of the Persons in the Trinity that we cannot speak otherwise. We cannot say that through the Spirit and by the Father we have access to Christ, or through the Father and by Christ we have access to the Spirit. We must observe the apostle's order—through Christ and by the Spirit we have access to the Father. Access unto the Father implies:—

1. *His sympathy with us.*—God is our Creator and Sovereign, but His authority is not harsh or arbitrary. He does not even deal with us according to the stern dictates of untempered justice. On the contrary, in love and sympathy He has for our benefit made His throne accessible. He will listen to our penitential confessions, our vows of obedience, our statements of want. He has sympathy with us.

2. *His ability to help us.*—That access is permitted to us, taken in connection with God's perfections, prove this. He raises no hope to disappoint, does not encourage that He may repel, but permits access that He may help and bless.

3. *His permission to speak freely.*—There is nothing contracted in God's method of blessing. We are introduced to His presence not to stand dumb before Him, nor to speak under the influence of slavish fear. We have such liberty as those enjoy who are introduced to the presence of a prince by a distinguished favourite, or such freedom as children have in addressing a father. We are brought into the presence of our King by His own Son; to our heavenly Father by Christ, our elder Brother. The results of this access to ourselves: 1. It teaches dependence; 2. Excites gratitude; 3. Produces comfort; 4. Promotes growth in grace.

II. **The medium of access.**—Under the law the high priest was the mediator through whom the people drew near to God. He went into the "holiest of all, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people" (Heb. ix. 7). Under the new covenant "boldness to enter into the holiest" is "by the blood of Jesus" (Heb. x. 19). But as the mediation of the Jewish high priest, though "done away in Christ," was typical, it may serve to teach us how we are to come to God. He sprinkled the blood of the sin-offering on the mercy-seat, and burnt incense within the veil (Lev. xvi.), thus symbolising the sacrifice and intercession of Christ.

1. *We, then, have access to God through Christ as a sacrifice.*—"Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. ix. 22). But, "that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," we could never, as suppliants, have found acceptance with God.

2. *Through Christ as an intercessor.*—"But this man," etc. (Heb. x. 12). A disciple in temptation cries for deliverance from evil, and Christ prays, "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me" (John xvii. 11). A dying saint asks for "an entrance into the heavenly kingdom," and Christ pleads, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am" (John xvii. 24). None need deem himself too unworthy to call on God who comes to Him through Christ's sacrifice and intercession.

III. **The assistance afforded by the Holy Spirit.**—As we have access unto the Father through Christ pleading *for* us, so we have access unto the Father by the Spirit pleading *in* us.

1. *The Spirit kindles holy desire.*—It is the work of the Spirit to draw off the hearts of men from the world and raise them to God in prayer. As in playing on a musical instrument no

string sounds untouched, so without this influence of the Spirit man would never look heavenward, or his heart fill with desire toward God.

2. *Prompts to immediate application.*—Blessings are often desired but feebly. The Spirit rebukes this hesitancy, and urges on to immediate application.

3. *Aids in that application.*—"Without the Spirit we know not what we should pray for" (Rom. viii. 26). Our thoughts wander, our affections chill, the fervour of our importunity flags, unless the Spirit "helpeth our infirmities."

Reflections.—1. *Those who do not enjoy this privilege are highly culpable.* 2. *Those who do enjoy this privilege are indeed happy.—The Lay Preacher.*

Access to God, revealing the Trinity in Unity.

I. **The end of human salvation is access to the Father.**—That is the first truth of our religion—that the source of all is meant to be the end of all, that as we all came forth from a divine Creator, so it is into divinity that we are to return and to find our final rest and satisfaction, not in ourselves, not in one another, but in the omnipotence, the omniscience, the perfectness, and the love of God. Now we are very apt to take it for granted that, however we may differ in our definitions and our belief of the deity of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we are all at one, there can be and there is no hesitation, about the deity of the Father. God is divine. God is God. And no doubt we do all assent in words to such a belief; but when we think what we mean by that word "God"; when we remember what we mean by "Father," namely, the first source and the final satisfaction of a dependent nature; and then when we look around and see such multitudes of people living as if there were no higher source for their being than accident and no higher satisfaction for their being than selfishness, do we not feel that there is need of a continual and most earnest preaching by word and act, from every pulpit of influence to which we can mount, of the divinity of the Father. The divinity of the Father needs assertion first of all. Let men once feel it, and then nature and their own hearts will come in with their sweet and solemn confirmations of it. But nature and the human heart do not teach it of themselves. The truest teaching of it must come from souls that are always going in and out before the divine Fatherhood themselves. By the sight of such souls others must come to seek the satisfaction that comes only from a divine end of life—must come to crave access to the Father. So we believe, and so we tempt other men to believe, in God the Father.

II. And now pass to **the divinity of the method.**—"Through Jesus Christ." Man is separated from God. That fact, testified to by broken associations, by alienated affections, by conflicting wills, stands written in the whole history of our race. And equally clear is it to him who reads the gospels, and enters into sympathy with their wonderful Person, that in Him, in Jesus of Nazareth, appeared the Mediator by whom was to be the Atonement. His was the life and nature which, standing between the Godhood and the manhood, was to bridge the gulf and make the firm bright road over which blessing and prayer might pass and repass with confident golden feet for ever. And then the question is—and when we ask it thus it becomes so much more than a dry problem of theology; it is a question for live, anxious men to ask with faces full of eagerness—Out of which nature came that Mediator? Out of which side of the chasm sprang the bridge leaping forth toward the other? Evidently on both sides that bridge is bedded deep and clings with a tenacity which shows how it belongs there. He is both human and divine. But from which side did the bridge spring? It is the most precious part of our belief that it was with God that the activity began. It is the very soul of the gospel, as I read it, that the Father's heart, sitting

above us in His holiness, yearned for us as we lay down here in our sin. And when there was no man to make an intercession, He sent His Son to tell us of His love, to live with us, to die for us, to lay His life like a strong bridge out from the divine side of existence, over which we might walk fearfully but safely, but into the divinity where we belonged. Through Him we have access to the Father. As the end was divine, so the method is divine. As it is to God that we come, so it is God who brings us there. I can think nothing else without dishonouring the tireless, quenchless love of God.

III. **The power of the act of man's salvation is the Holy Spirit.**—"Through Christ Jesus we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." What do we mean by the Holy Spirit being the power of salvation? I think we are often deluded and misled by carrying out too far some of the figurative forms in which the Bible and the religious experience of men express the saving of the soul. For instance, salvation is described as the lifting of the soul out of a pit and putting it upon a pinnacle, or on a safe high platform of grace. The figure is strong and clear. Nothing can overstate the utter dependence of the soul on God for its deliverance; but if we let the figure leave in our minds an impression of the human soul as a dead, passive thing, to be lifted from one place to the other like a torpid log that makes no effort of its own either for co-operation or resistance, then the figure has misled us. The soul is a live thing. Everything that is done with it must be done in and through its own essential life. If a soul is saved, it must be by the salvation, the sanctification, of its essential life; if a soul is lost, it must be by perdition of its life, by the degradation of its affections and desires and hopes. Let there be nothing merely mechanical in the conception of the way God treats these souls of ours. He works upon them in the vitality of thought, passion, and will that He put into them. And so when a soul comes to the Father through the Saviour, its whole essential vitality moves in the act. When this experience is reached, then see what Godhood the soul has come to recognise in the world. First, there is the creative Deity from which it sprang, and to which it is struggling to return—"the divine End, God the Father." Then there is the incarnate Deity, which makes that return possible by the exhibition of God's love—the divine Power of salvation, God the Holy Spirit. To the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. This appears to be the truth of the Deity as it relates to us. I say again, "as it relates to us." What it may be in itself; how Father, Son, and Spirit meet in the perfect Godhood; what infinite truth more there may, there must, be in that Godhood, no man can dare to guess. But, to us, God is the end, the method, and the power of salvation; so He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is in the perfect harmony of these sacred personalities that the precious unity of the Deity consists. I look at the theologies, and so often it seems as if the harmony of Father, Son, and Spirit has been lost, both by those that own and by those that disown the Trinity. One theology makes the Father hard and cruel, longing as it were for man's punishment, extorting from the Son the last drops of life-blood which man's sin had incurred as penalty. Another theology makes the Son merely one of the multitude of sinning men, with somewhat bolder aspirations laying hold on a forgiveness which God might give but which no mortal might assume. Still another theology can find no God in the human heart at all; merely a fermentation of human nature is this desire after goodness, this reaching out towards Divinity. The end is not worthy of the method. I do not want to come to such a Father as some of the theologians have painted. Or the method is not worthy of the end. No man could come to the perfect God through such a Jesus as some men

have described. Or the power is too weak for both; and all that Christ has done lies useless, and all the Father's welcome waits in vain for the soul that has in it no Holy Ghost. But let each be real and each be worthy of the others, and the salvation is complete. But each cannot be worthy of the others unless each is perfect. But each cannot be perfect unless each is divine; that is, our faith is in the Trinity—three Persons and one God.—*Philips Brooks.*

The Christian Law of Prayer—

I. **To the Father.**—1. How honourable! Right of entry to an earthly sovereign. 2. How delightful! Our pleasures may be graduated according to the part of our nature in which they have their rise. The pleasures of devotion are the highest taste for devotion. 3. How profitable! God is able to bestow all temporal and spiritual blessings. 4. How solemn! The intercourse of our spirit with the Father of our spirits. Heart to heart.

II. **Through the Son.**—1. Through His atonement. Legal barriers to our access must be removed. Have been removed by the death of Christ as a satisfaction to divine Justice. He has demolished the wall, He has constructed a bridge across the chasm, He has laid down His own body as the medium of approach. 2. Through His intercession. It perpetuates His sacrifice. The Jewish high priest entering the holy of holies on the Great Day of Atonement. Amyntas, mother of Coriolanus; Philippa after the siege of Calais.

III. **By the Spirit.**—1. He teaches us what are our wants. For the most part we are likely to be aware of our temporal wants. In spiritual things the greater our need the less our sense of need. 2. He makes us willing to ask the supply of our wants. Aversion to beg. Aversion to lay bare the symptoms of humiliating disease. 3. He gives us power to spread our wants before God. One person employed to write a letter or a petition for another. 4. He inspires us with confidence to plead with importunity and faith. Confidence in the Father, in the Son, in the power of prayer.—*G. Brooks.*

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

The Church the Temple of God.

I. **Enjoying special privileges.**—1. *A saintly citizenship.* "No more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints" (ver. 19). The apostle has spoken of the separation and enmity existing between Jew and Gentile. The Jew, trained to believe in the one invisible and only true God, who could not be imagined by any material form, learned to look with hatred and contempt on the outcast, lawless Gentile, with his idol deities in every valley and on every hill; and the intellectual Gentile looked with philosophic pride on the stern land of the Hebrew and in philosophic scorn on his strange, exclusive loneliness. They were not only at enmity with each other, but both were at enmity with God. Now the writer is showing that by the provisions of the gospel both Greek and Jew are united as citizens of one divine kingdom. They enjoy the same privileges, and are in actual fellowship with prophets and apostles and all holy souls in all ages, and are sanctified subjects of a kingdom that can never be moved.

2. *A family life.*—"And of the household of God" (ver. 19). The Church is a family having one Father in God, one Brother in Christ, one life in the Spirit, and one home in heaven. As in earthly families, there are diversities of character, tastes, gifts, tendencies, and manifestations, but all the members of the heavenly household are bound together by the one common bond of love to God and to each other.

II. **Resting on a sure foundation** (ver. 20).—The materials composing the foundation of the Church are *living* stones—teachers and confessors of the truth, "apostles and prophets"; but Christ, as the one foundation, is the "chief corner-stone." The foundation of the Church is not so much in the witnesses of the truth as in the truth itself, and in propagating which truth the first teachers and confessors sacrificed their all. The truth which produced and sustained the martyrs is itself immovable. The apostles and prophets—teachers in the apostolic times—laid the first course in the foundation of the Church, and were careful to recognise and build only one foundation, united and held together by the one corner-stone—Christ Jesus. They fixed the pattern and standard of Christian doctrine and practice. The Christian Church is sure because the foundation is deep and broad, and can never be removed and replaced by any human structure.

III. **Ever rising to a higher perfection** (ver. 21).—The image is that of an extensive pile of buildings, such as the ancient temples commonly were, in process of construction at different points over a wide area. The builders work in concert upon a common plan. The several parts of the work are adjusted to each other, and the various operations in process are so harmonised that the entire construction preserves the unity of the architect's design. Such an edifice was the apostolic Church—one but of many parts—in its diverse gifts and multiplied activities animated by one Spirit and directed towards one divine purpose (*Findlay*). Since the Day of Pentecost, when three thousand living stones were laid on the foundation, the Church has been growing in symmetry, beauty, and vastness, and it is constantly advancing towards perfection. The building, though apparently disjoined and working in separate parts, is growing into a final unity.

IV. **Made by the Spirit His glorious dwelling-place** (ver. 22).—The Holy Spirit is the supreme Builder as He is the supreme Witness to Jesus Christ (John xv. 26, 27). The words "in the Spirit" denote not the mode of God's habitation—that is self-evident—but the agency engaged in building this new house of God. With one chief corner-stone to rest upon, and one Spirit to inspire and control them, the apostles and prophets laid their foundation, and the Church was builded together for a habitation of God. Hence its unity. But for this sovereign influence the primitive founders of Christianity, like later Church leaders, would have fallen into fatal discord (*Findlay*). The Church is a spiritual organisation, pervaded and made vital and progressive by the presence and operation of the Spirit of God. An organ is composed of several instruments—the choir, the swell, the pedal, the great; and many stops—the diapason, the flute, the trumpet; and yet it is one. And the Church of God is one. One Spirit—one breath of wind turned on by one living Hand—makes all the organ vocal.

Lessons.—1. *The Church is the depositary of great religious privileges.* 2. *God dwells in the Church by dwelling in the heart of every member of it.* 3. *The Church provides every facility for worship and service.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 19-22. *The Church of God a Spiritual Building.*

I. **The apostle represents the Church of God under the figure of a city and a household.**—1. *A Church must resemble a family or city in respect of order and government;* for without these a religious society can no more subsist than a civil community or a household. 2. *In a city or household all the members have a mutual relation and partake in the common privileges;* and though they are placed in different stations and conditions, they must all contribute to the general happiness. 3. *In a city and*

also in a family there is a common interest. 4. *In a well-ordered city or household there will be peace and unity;* so there ought to be in a Christian Church.

II. **The manner in which the Church is founded.**—The mediation of Christ is the foundation of our faith and hope. The apostles and prophets are a foundation only as they describe and exhibit to us the doctrines and works, the atonement and intercession, of the Redeemer. In Him all the doctrines of the apostles and prophets meet and unite, as the stones in the foundation are fixed and bound together by the corner-stone.

III. **The Church must be united with and framed into the foundation.**—Thus it may stand secure. Christ is the chief corner-stone in which all the building is framed. That only is true faith in Christ which regards Him as the foundation of our present hope and final acceptance.

IV. **As the Church must rest on the foundation, so the several parts of it must be framed and inserted into each other.**—As it is faith which fixes the saints on Christ the foundation, so it is love which binds them together among themselves. If we would preserve the beauty, strength, and dignity of the spiritual house, we must be watchful to repair breaches as soon as they appear, and to remove those materials which are become too corrupt to be repaired, lest they communicate their own corruption to sounder parts.

V. **The Church is to grow into a holy temple for God through the Spirit.**—We must not content ourselves with having built on the true foundation, but must bring the structure to a more finished and beautiful condition. The Church may grow and make increase both by the progress of its present members in knowledge and holiness and by the addition of new members who become fellow-workers in the spiritual building. God dwells in His Church, not only by His word and ordinances, but also by the influence of His Spirit which He affords to assist His people in the duties of His worship and to open their hearts for the reception of His word.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 19. *Christian Prayer a Witness of Christian Citizenship.*

I. **The foundation of the citizenship of the Christian.**—In access to the Father—in the power of approaching Him in full, free, trustful prayer.

1. *Christian prayer is the approach of the individual soul to God as its Father.*—Until a man utterly believes in Christ he can never pray aright. There are veils around the unbelieving spirit which hinder this free, confiding approach. The touch of God startles memories, rouses ghosts of the past in the soul's secret chambers; they flutter fearfully in the strange divine light, and the man shudders and dare not pray. A man bathed in the life of God in prayer feels he is no more a stranger and a foreigner, but has entered into God's kingdom, for God is his Father.

2. *That prayer of the individual soul must lead to the united worship of God's Church.*—We cannot always pray alone. The men who stand most aloof from social worship are not the men who manifest the highest spiritual life. Our highest prayers are our most universal. I do not say we don't feel their individuality, we do—but in and through their universality.

II. **The nature of Christian citizenship.**—1. *Prayer a witness to our fellowship with the Church of all time.* Realising the Fatherhood of God in the holy converse of prayer, we are nearer men. Our selfishness, our narrow, isolating peculiarities begin to fade. In our highest prayers we realise common wants.

2. *Prayer a witness to our fellowship with the Church of eternity.*—All emotions of eternity catch the tone of prayer. Sometimes in the evening, when the sounds of the world are still and the sense of eternity breaks in upon us, is not that feeling a prayer? We know that we are right, that in worship we have taken no earthly

posture, but an attitude from higher regions.

Lessons.—1. *Live as members of the kingdom.* 2. *Expect the signs of citizenship—the crown of thorns, the cross.* 3. *Live in hope of the final in-gathering.—E. L. Hull.*

The Communion of Saints.

I. **Society becomes possible only through religion.**—Men might be gregarious without it, but not social. Instinct which unites them in detail prevents their wider combination. Intellect affords light to show the elements of union, but no heat to give them crystalline form. Self-will is prevailingly a repulsive power, and often disintegrates the most solid of human masses. Some sense of a divine Presence, some consciousness of a higher law, some pressure of a solemn necessity, will be found to have preceded the organisation of every human community and to have gone out and perished before its death.

II. **Worship exhibits its uniting principle under the simplest form, in the sympathies it diffuses among the members of the same religious assembly.**—There is, however, no necessary fellowship, as of saints, in the mere assembling of ourselves together; but only in the true and simple spirit of worship. Where a pure devotion really exists, the fellowship it produces spreads far beyond the separate circle of each Christian assembly. Surely it is a glorious thing to call up, while we worship, the wide image of Christendom this day. Could we be lifted up above this sphere and look down as it rolls beneath this day's sun, and catch its murmurs as they rise, should we not behold land after land turned into a Christian shrine? In how many tongues, by what various voices, with what measureless intensity of love, is the name of Christ breathed forth to-day!

III. **But our worship here brings us into yet nobler connections.**—It unites us by a chain of closest sympathy with past generations. In our helps to faith and devotion we avail ourselves of the thought and piety of many extinct ages. Do not we, the living, take up in adoration and prayer the thoughts of the dead and find them divinely true? What an impressive testimony is this to the sameness of our nature through every age and the immortal perseverance of its holier affections!

IV. **And soon we too shall drop the note of earthly aspiration and join that upper anthem of diviner love.**—The communion of saints brings us to their conflict first, their blessings afterwards. Those who will not with much patience strive with the evil can have no dear fellowship with the good; we must weep their tears ere we can win their peace.—*Martineau.*

Characteristics of Believers.

I. **Believers are here described as having been strangers and foreigners.**—1. There are relative expressions, meaning that natural men are strangers to the household of God and foreigners as respects the city of Zion. 2. Consider the natural man with reference to the city of Zion, and the truth of this representation will appear. (1) He is a stranger and foreigner—(*a*) By a sentence of exile (Gen. iii.). (*b*) By birth (Gen. v. 3; John iii. 6). (2) He is proved to be a stranger and foreigner—(*a*) By features (Gal. v. 19-21). (*b*) By manners (1 Pet. iv. 3). (*c*) By language. As such he is under another ruler (Eph. ii. 2), he is at war (Gal. iv. 29). 3. Though "strangers and foreigners" in relation to Zion, yet men are naturalised in another country. 4. This does not imply living beyond the pale of the visible Church. The Parable of the Tares. An alien to the saints and a stranger to God may be in the visible Church. 5. That there are "strangers and foreigners" in the Church seems a calamity. (1) They are thereby deceived. (2) They injure Christians. (3) They betray Christ.

II. **Believers are described as being fellow-citizens with the saints.**—

1. They are citizens. (1) Their sentence of exile is cancelled (ver. 13). (2) They are naturalised by birth (John iii. 5). (3) They are reconciled to God and believers. (4) They are under Zion's government. 2. They are "fellow-citizens with the saints." (1) They have intercourse—holy. (2) They are united by mutual love. (3) They have reciprocal duties. (4) They have common rights and privileges. (5) They have common honour and reputation. (6) They have common prosperity and adversity. (7) They have common enemies. (8) They have common defence and safety. (9) They have a common history. 3. As a congregation we are professedly a section of this peculiar and spiritual community. (1) Do we seek each other's welfare? (2) Is our intercourse the communion of saints? (3) Are we careful of each other's reputation? 4. Are we as a congregation isolating ourselves from each other? Are we "fellow-citizens with the saints"? 5. The city is above.

III. **Believers are here described as belonging to the household of God.** —1. Believers as citizens are God's subjects. 2. As belonging to God's household they are His children. 3. As in God's household—(1) They are like Him. (2) They are near to Him. (3) They see His face. (4) They enjoy His fellowship. (5) They are provided for by Him. (6) They are under His protection. (7) They serve Him. (8) They worship Him—His house is a temple. 4. These are very tangible privileges, and belong to this present life. 5. Many may suppose that they are "fellow-citizens with the saints" whose experience does not prove that they are "of the household of God." 6. For this "household" God has "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."—*Stewart.*

Vers. 20, 21. *The Church a Divine Edifice.*—1. Though God Himself be the principal Author and Builder of this spiritual edifice, yet He employs His called ministers and servants as instruments, among whom He made special use of the prophets and apostles for laying the foundation in so far as they first did reveal and preach Jesus Christ, and commit to writings such truths concerning Him as are necessary for salvation, while other ministers are employed in preaching Christ to build up the elect on the foundation laid by them. 2. There is a sweet harmony and full agreement between the doctrines and writings of the prophets and apostles in holding forth Christ for a foundation and rock of salvation, the latter having taught and written nothing but what was prefigured in types and foretold in prophecies by the former. 3. As growth in grace is a privilege which appertains to all parts of this spiritual building who are yet on earth, so this growth of theirs flows from their union and communion with Christ; and the more their union is improved by daily extracting renewed influence from Him, they cannot choose but thrive the better in spiritual growth.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 22. *The Church the Habitation of God.*—1. Jesus Christ differs from the foundation of other buildings in this, that every particular believer is not only laid upon Him and supported by Him as in material buildings, but they are also indented in Him, and hid, as it were, in the clefts of the rock by saving faith. 2. As all believers, however far soever removed by distance, are yet more strictly tied and joined together, so by taking band with Christ the foundation, they are fastened one to another as the stones of a building. 3. So inseparable is the union among the persons of the Trinity that the presence and indwelling of One is sufficient to prove the indwelling of all; for believers are a habitation to God the Father and Son, because the Spirit dwells in and sanctifies them.—*Ibid.*

CHAPTER III.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **The prisoner of Jesus Christ** may be regarded as "the prisoner whom the Lord has bound" (so Winer and Meyer), or as "a prisoner belonging to Christ," or again as "the prisoner for Christ's sake." The indignity of an ambassador being "thrown into irons" is lost in the feeling of being, even though bound, the representative of such a Lord.

Ver. 2. **If ye have heard.**—We have the same form of expression at iv. 21—"assuming, that is, that ye heard" (cf. Col. i. 23). **Of the grace.**—The favour which God conferred on me in appointing me your apostle. The divine "Taskmaster" (to use Milton's expression) confers honour upon us when He sets us to work. "He is not served by men's hands as though He needed anything" (Acts xvii. 25).

Ver. 3. **How that by revelation.**—The familiar disavowal of any other source than the will of God (cf. Gal. i. 12).

Ver. 4. **Ye may understand my knowledge.**—You may, as the public reader proceeds to read my letter, discern my insight of the mystery.

Ver. 5. **Which in other ages.**—R.V. "other generations." Might possibly refer to those dim ages of the past national history when the Gentiles were thought of only as left to "uncovenanted mercies." We must note the word for "other"—it means a "different kind." **Was not made known . . . as it is now revealed.**—If any distinction is to be observed, we may say the "revelation" is one of the ways of "making known" (see ver. 3) the intuitional. **Unto His holy apostles and prophets.**—"If all saints were holy *à fortiori* the apostles" (*Bishop Alexander*).

Ver. 6. **Fellow-heirs . . . the same body . . . partakers.**—"The A.V. loses a point of similarity in the three Gentile privileges by not expressing the force of the Greek compounds by the same English word. Lit. 'heirs together,' 'incorporated together,' 'sharers together,' not heirs after, but together with, the Jews; not attached to the Hebrew body, but incorporated into it together with the element that previously constituted it; not receivers of the promise after others had been satisfied, but partakers of it together with them" (*Bishop Alexander*). "Co-heirs, and concorporate, and comparticipant. The strange English words may perhaps correspond to the strange Greek words which St. Paul invented to express this newly revealed mystery in the strongest form, as though no words could be too strong to express his conception of the reunion in Christ of those who apart from Him are separate and divided" (*Farrar*).

Ver. 7. **Whereof I was made a minister.**—A deacon, a runner of errands. A lowly word, which reminds us of his own self-estimate—"not worthy to be called an apostle"—and prepares us for the strange expression in ver. 8.

Ver. 8. **Less than the least of all saints.**—"As though we said, 'Leaster than all Christians'" (*Bishop Alexander*). "The greatest sinner, the greatest saint, are equidistant from the goal where the mind rests in satisfaction with itself. With the growth in goodness grows the sense of sin. One law fulfilled shows a thousand neglected" (*Mozley, quoted by Farrar*). **The unsearchable riches.**—"The untrackable wealth" (*Farrar*), inexplicable by creaturely intelligences, unspeakable therefore by human tongues.

Ver. 9. **And to make all men see.**—He says to the Galatians (iii. 1), "Christ was placarded before you"—so here he wants men to see for themselves.

Ver. 10. **To the intent that now . . . might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.**—The Church as it expands from a "little flock" to a "multitude which no man can number" is to declare the multiform wisdom of God, ever fertile in new modes of operation. "Manifold" represents a word used to describe a floral wreath as consisting of "variegated" flowers.

Ver. 12. **In whom we have boldness.**—Originally meaning as regards speech. In Christ the reconciled child of God has the right of speaking to God without reserve. The same word is translated "confidence" in 1 John v. 14, A.V.: "It is the free, joyful mood of those reconciled to God" (*Meyer*). **And access.**—As in ii. 13. **With confidence.**—Hardly as equal to assurance—certainly never self-assurance, but in quiet leaning on the arm of Christ.

Ver. 13. **I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations.**—Compare 2 Cor. iv. 1-16, where the same word is used. As an agonised sufferer, heroically suppressing every sign of pain, begs those who wait on him not to give way to grief; as Socrates, having quaffed the poison, rallies his friends, who have broken out into uncontrollable weeping, with the words, "What are you doing, my friends? What! such fine men as you are! Oh, where is virtue?"; so (with a possible reminiscence of Acts xx. 36-38) St. Paul begs his readers not to lose heart.

Ver. 15. **The whole family.**—R.V. "every family." The word for "family" is only found in the New Testament in St. Luke ii. 4 and Acts iii. 25; in one translated "lineage," in the other "kindreds" in A.V.; consistently as "family" by R.V. Chrysostom, and others who followed him, have surely a special claim to be heard. They translate it "races." Bishop Alexander contends for the A.V. translation, "*the whole*." He says, "A special force and signification in the expression make this translation necessary" (cf. ii. 19).

Ver. 16. **The riches of His glory.**—"The whole glorious perfection of God." **To be strengthened with might.**—There may be a verbal connection with the "fainting" of ver. 13, but the thought goes far out beyond that. **In the inner man.**—We are reminded again of the text quoted above (2 Cor. iv. 16). A mode of expression derived from the Platonic school, not necessarily presupposing any acquaintance with that system of philosophy.

Ver. 17. **That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.**—The condition of this, declared by Christ Himself, is that a man should keep the word of Christ. **Being rooted and grounded.**—A double metaphor—of a tree that has struck its roots deep into the crevices of the rock, and of a building with a foundation of bed-rock. "Every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God" (1 John iv. 7). Love conditions knowledge of things divine (see ver. 18).

Ver. 18. **May be able.**—Perfectly able. **With all saints.**—The highest and most precious knowledge Paul can desire only as a common possession of all Christians. **What is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height.**—"The deeply affected mind with its poetico-imaginative intuition looks upon the *metaphysical* magnitude as a *physical, mathematical* one. Every special attempt at interpretation is unpsychological, and only gives scope to that caprice which profanes by dissecting the outpouring of enthusiasm" (*Meyer*).

Ver. 19. **And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.**—"An *adequate* knowledge of the love of Christ transcends human capacity, but the *relative* knowledge of the same opens up in a higher degree the more the heart is filled with the Spirit of Christ, and thereby is strengthened in loving. This knowledge is not *discursive*, but based in the consciousness of experience" (*Meyer*).

Ver. 20. **Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly.**—After his prayer proper is ended the full heart of the apostle swells out into a solemn doxology The frequent and bold compound expressions of St. Paul (*Farrar* says twenty of the New Testament twenty-eight with ὑπέρ are St. Paul's) spring from the endeavours adequately to express his energetic thought. **According to the power that worketh in us.**—"The measure of a man" or "of an angel" is insufficient here. Things are not achieved by creaturely mensuration where God works (cf. i. 19-23).

Ver. 21. **To Him be the glory.**—"The honour due to His name." **By Christ Jesus.**—He that "climbeth up some other way" with his offering courts his own destruction. **Throughout all ages, world without end.**—R.V. "Unto all generations, for ever and ever." A good specimen of the "exceeding abundantly above all that we . . . understand" as regarded under the aspect of time. It carries our thoughts along the vista of the future, till time melts into eternity.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—6.

An Enlarged Gospel—

I. Declaring the admission of the Gentiles on the same footing as the Jews to its highest privileges (ver. 6).—It came as a surprise to the world of the apostle's day that the gospel he preached offered its blessings on equal terms to Jew and Gentile. The Jew, accustomed to be the sole repository of divine revelation, was staggered at the discovery that heaven extended its favours to the outcast, heathenish Gentile; and the Gentile, proudly trusting to his own intellectual activity in the search after truth, greeted with wonder the ampler and loftier revelations of the new evangel. It seemed too good to be true. A new era was dawning, and men were dazzled and bewildered with the splendour of the vision. It is now authoritatively declared that, on the simple conditions of penitence and faith, the Gentile world is incorporated into the body of Christ. So far from being excluded from the divine favour, the believing Gentiles are reckoned as "fellow-heirs, and of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel"; and the marvel is increased by the discovery that this astounding privilege is no new thought in the divine mind, but was an essential part of the purpose concerning the race that had been developing in the slow

march of the ages. The Hebrew Scriptures with their records of extraordinary theophanies, the saintly characters of Old Testament times, the Messianic revelations and the wealth of spiritual blessing which the isolated Jew had selfishly appropriated to himself, are the heaven-given privileges of universal man.

II. **Was wrapped in mystery for ages.**—"Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men" (ver. 5). The mystery all centres in Christ. The revelation of Messiah as the hope and salvation of the race was dimly and slowly unveiled in progressive stages. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." Some of His grandest movements are veiled in mystery till the right moment comes, when the obscurity vanishes and the vastness and beauty of the completed work elicit our admiration and praise. We are familiar with this process in the natural world and in the progress of human history. The fruits of the earth do not reach maturity at a bound. Slowly and in secret the bud is rounded, then comes the delicately tinted blossom, and afterwards the tempting, mellow fruit. The same may be said of the growth of human character. It reaches the higher grades of mental and moral excellence by slow and silent stages, and advances in the ratio of the fidelity and energy with which the man carries out the great plan of his life-career. So the revelation of the gospel mystery has been gradual and progressive. The purpose itself is incapable of progress—it has been fixed from eternity; but it has been made known to the world in portions suited to each succeeding period of its history. The law shadowed forth that purpose with more fulness than any previous dispensation, and the prophets went beyond the law, occupying a middle place between it and the gospel, while the gospel in its fuller revelation has gone as far beyond the prophets as they went beyond the law. Thus we see that God "who appears deliberate in all His operations" has unfolded His great purpose to save the race by slow and successive stages. The mystery of yesterday is the sunlit epiphany of to-day.

III. **Was specially revealed by the Spirit.**—"How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery" (ver. 3). "As it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (ver. 5). Notwithstanding the gradual disclosure of the mystery of the gospel, its full significance could not have been caught without supernatural help. Mere flux of time adds nothing to our knowledge; nor can the most active intelligence decipher the spiritual meaning of truth. The Spirit of God, operating on the alert and awakened mind of the apostle, revealed to him the glory and power of Christ—the hidden mystery of ages—and opened to him the far-reaching provisions of the enlarged gospel of which Christ is the inexhaustible theme. There is still much mystery in the gospel that remains to be fathomed—the problem of the atonement, the origin of sin, the future destiny and eternal state of human souls, and the revelation of Christ and His Church to present-day social and economic questions in their bearing on human development and the future prosperity of the kingdom of God on earth. We are in daily need of the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit.

IV. **Was entrusted to man as a stewardship of divine grace.**—"The dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward" (ver. 2). The mystery of the gospel was revealed to Paul that he might dispense its benefits to others. Former generations had received light from heaven; but not sufficiently appreciating it, or wishing to keep it within too narrow a sphere, it grew dim and went out. Where it fell on prepared hearts it was used for the illumination and blessing of others. Paul was divinely prepared for the revelation; he received it in trust for others; he saw the boundless provisions of the gospel, and became a powerful advocate of its universal claims. Every minister is a steward of the mysteries of the kingdom of God, and it is his joy to minister to others whatever of insight into truth and grace of experience the divine Spirit may

entrust to him. The gospel is an ever-enlarging gospel to the soul lit up and informed by the revealing Spirit.

Lessons.—1. *The gospel is an advance on all previous revelations.* 2. *It is the grandest revelation of saving truth.* 3. *It can be known and enjoyed only by the Spirit.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1-21. *Riches of Christ.*—Many make Christianity something local, temporary, and thus degrade it. Christ is inexhaustible for mind and heart; we find all in Him. Let us never make of this rich Christ a poor one. What Christ has instituted must be something transcendent, and not so common that every intellect can discover it.—*Heubner.*

Vers. 1-6. *The Calling of the Gentiles.*

I. **Paul calls himself a prisoner of Christ for the Gentiles.**—The liberality of his sentiments towards them and the boldness with which he asserted their title to equal privileges with Jews were the principal reasons why the latter persecuted him with such violence, and caused him to be sent a prisoner to Rome. The spring of this bitter enmity in the Jews was their spiritual pride and worldly affection. Liberality of sentiment essentially belongs to true religion. Bigotry, hatred, and envy among Christians debase their character and scandalise their profession. We should entertain exalted thoughts of the divine Goodness. Such thoughts enlarge the mind and liberalise the feelings.

II. **The gospel is called a dispensation of the grace of God.**—It is a discovery of that method which the wisdom of God has chosen for dispensing His grace and mercy toward fallen men. It is called the gospel of God as it originated in His pleasure; and the gospel of Christ as He is the immediate author of it, and His doctrines and works, His life and death, His resurrection and ascension, and the blessings procured by Him are the subjects on which it principally treats. The grace which the gospel offers is pardon and glory. Under such a dispensation how inexcusable are the impenitent, and how amazing will be the punishment of those who finally perish in their guilt!

III. **This dispensation was committed to the apostle for the benefit of mankind.**—It was a trust committed to him by the will of God, not a power arrogated by his own presumption. He did not rely on a secret, internal call as what alone would warrant him to commence as a preacher. He carefully conformed to the order which Christ has instituted in His Church. He instructed Timothy and Titus to do likewise. Ministers are not to found their warrant to preach on any immediate revelation. If they should pretend to this, it would be no warrant for them to assume it, unless they can by miracles prove to the world the reality of the pretended revelation.

IV. **The knowledge of the gospel was communicated to Paul by revelation.**—God did not, at the expense of inspiration, teach the apostles those things which they knew or might know by other means. But where actual knowledge and the means of obtaining it were wanting, there inspiration supplied the defect. It is not necessary for us to know the nature of this inspiration, or the manner in which the apostles were assured of its divinity. If we believe there is an infinite and all-perfect Spirit, who pervades universal nature, we must believe He can reveal His will to men by such an immediate influence as shall carry its own evidence and leave no possible doubt of its reality. If we deny the possibility of a certain inspiration from God, we deny that power to Him which we ourselves possess, for we can speak to men in such a manner that they shall certainly know we speak to them

and perfectly understand our meaning. —*Lathrop.*

Vers. 4, 6. *The Knowledge of Christ intended for All.*—It is significant that the inscription on the cross was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. 1. *Hebrew*, the language of religion, of the revelation concerning the one true God. 2. *Greek*, the language of literature, of arts and culture, the best medium in which to transmit the literature of the New Testament, as Hebrew was for that of the Old. It might be designated as the *human* language. 3. *Latin*, the language of the conquerors and masters of the world—also of the Roman Empire, as that kingdom of worldly aggrandisement and power, falsehood and wrong, in opposition to the kingdom of God destined to uproot and replace it. The Roman soldiers stationed throughout Europe became useful factors in the spread of the gospel. Note also the synoptic gospels of 1. *Matthew*—Hebrew in thought and diction, written to convince Jews. 2. *Mark*—Latin in thought, and written for the Roman mind. 3. *Luke*—Greek in thought and style, written for Gentiles.

Vers. 4, 5. *God known in Christ.*—After the death of Pascal there was found in the lining of his coat a parchment which he never parted from, in order to keep in his memory a certain epoch in his life. It contained these words: "Certainty—joy—the God of Jesus Christ, not of the philosophers and savants. Oh that I may never be separated from Him!" The explanation of this is, that on one memorable night, during a holy watching, he had met, not merely the Machinist of the universe, the God who is but the substance or the law of the world, but the God who wills and creates the happiness of His children.

Vers. 5, 6. *The Comprehensiveness of the Gospel.*—1. God's purpose to call the Gentiles was not altogether unknown to the ancient Church; but it was not so clearly revealed under the Old Testament as under the New. 2. Though God might easily communicate the knowledge of Himself unto all immediately and without the help of second means, yet He hath chosen so to communicate His mind to some few only who have, at His appointment, set down in sacred writ what they immediately received, by which means the knowledge of God may, in an ordinary way, be conveyed to others. 3. It is a great and glorious privilege to be a part of that mystical body of which Christ is Head, because of the strict union such have with Christ and with all believers in Christ, and because of their interest in all the privileges of that body and in the gifts and graces of every member of it.—*Fergusson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7—9.

An Exalted Ministerial Commission—

I. **To distribute the unbounded wealth of the gospel.**—"Unto me . . . is this grace given, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ" (ver. 8). In calling the gospel "the unsearchable riches of Christ" the apostle signifies that Christ, the whole truth about Him and centred in Him, is the theme of his preaching, and that in Christ he finds a mine of inexhaustible wealth, a treasure of truth which cannot be told. He speaks as one who has searched—searched so long, so far, as to have had produced on his mind the impression of unsearchableness. His whole style of writing in this chapter is that of a man overwhelmed with a sense of the infinite grace of God revealed in Christ. The expression "unsearchable riches," while conveying the same impression of infinitude as the words "breadth," "length," "height," "depth," suggests a different idea—that of a mine of precious metal, rather than that of a vast continent of great length and breadth with high mountains and deep valleys spread over its surface. Paul speaks as

a man digging in a recently discovered gold-field, who finds particles of the precious metal in such abundance that he cannot refrain from exclaiming ever and anon, "What an inexhaustible supply of gold is here!" He speaks further as one who feels it his special business to let all the world know of this gold-field, and invite all to come and get a share of its wealth (*A. B. Bruce*).

II. **To reveal to men the secret mind of God.**—1. *The gospel was for long hidden alone in God.* "Which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God" (ver. 9). It was a mystery hid *in* God, not *from* God. The idea of the universality of the gospel, though veiled for ages by the limitations of the divine dealings with the Jewish people, was never absent from the mind of God. Down through the rolling years one eternal purpose runs, and now and then the most gifted of the Hebrew seers caught a glimpse of its ever-widening range. This great secret of the ages was revealed to Paul in such clearness and fulness that he regarded it as the one purpose of his life—his heaven-sent commission—to make it known to his fellow-men, of whatever nationality.

2. *The purpose of the creation of all things by Christ was also a part of the divine mystery.*—"Who created all things by Jesus Christ" (ver. 9). The statement of this fact—thrown in by way of parenthesis—links the whole created things with the development of the divine purpose, and asserts the absolute sovereignty of Jesus over all worlds. In some way yet to be more fully explained as the divine purpose ripens all created beings are to be advantaged by the sublime redemptive work unfolded in the gospel. "For He hath created all things, and by Him all things consist."

3. *The mystery was revealed to one for the benefit of all.*—"And to make all men see what is the fellowship [the stewardship] of the mystery" (ver. 9). It was well for us and the race that the revelation and commission were committed to one who by training and gifts was so well qualified to explain and propagate the grand divine idea. The barriers of Jewish prejudice in Paul were swept away by the vastness and universality of the message. He saw it included his Hebrew brethren—and to them the gospel was first preached—but he saw also it included all in its comprehensive sweep. Paul was not alone among the apostles in comprehending the breadth of the gospel; but he was foremost and most resolute and unbending in battling for the right of the Gentiles to be admitted to all its blessed privileges. He thought out the gospel for himself, and he became the fearless and astute champion of the sinning race. What is accepted as a commonplace to-day was not won without argument, suffering, and struggle.

III. **Bestowed as an act of divine grace.**—1. *As an act of divine grace it was confirmed by the conscious possession of divine power.* "Given unto me by the effectual working of His power" (ver. 7). Paul himself experienced the transforming power of the gospel. He was deeply convinced of its truth, he believed and embraced its provisions, he accepted Christ as the living core of the gospel, and he was thrilled with the divine power that wrought in him a great moral change. He spoke not only with the force and authority of clearly apprehended truth, but with the unfaltering certitude of personal experience. He was henceforth the willing agent of the divine power working within him.

2. *As an act of divine grace his commission overwhelmed him with a sense of personal unworthiness.*—"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given" (ver. 8). The immense favour humbles him to the dust. That Saul, the Pharisee and the persecutor, the most unworthy and unlikely of men, should be the chosen vessel to bear Christ's riches to the Gentile world, how shall he sufficiently give thanks for this! how express his wonder at the unfathomable wisdom and goodness that the choice displays in the mind of God! But we can

see that this choice was precisely the fittest. A Hebrew of the Hebrews, steeped in Jewish traditions and glorying in his sacred ancestry, none knew better than the apostle Paul how rich were the treasures stored in the house of Abraham that he had to make over to the Gentiles. A true son of that house, he was the fittest to lead in the aliens, to show them its precious things, and make them at home within its walls (*Findlay*).

Lessons.—1. *The minister of the gospel has a solemn responsibility.* 2. *Should be faithful and earnest in his work.* 3. *Should guard against temptations to pride.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 7. *A God-made Minister.*—1. It is not sufficient warrant for any to meddle with the ministerial office that he hath competent gifts, except he have also ministerial power and authority conveyed to him, either immediately by God, as it was in the calling of the apostles, or mediately according to that order which God has established in His Church, as in the calling of ordinary ministers. 2. As it is required to make a man a minister that he be endued with competent abilities and gifts for that employment, so it is no less requisite that God concur with him. God giveth not to all one and the same gift, or in the same measure, but to some a greater, to others a less, as He hath more or less to do with them. 3. So great and many are the difficulties of ministers before they attain to freedom and boldness in exercising their ministerial gift that no less is required than the power of God, working effectually with a kind of pith and energy. A minister will be always ready to acknowledge his gifts as from God and His powerful working in him, and not to his own dignity, diligence, or parts.—*Fergusson.*

Vers. 8, 9. *The Apostle's View of his Ministry.*

I. **Consider what a humble opinion the apostle had of himself.**—"Who am less than the least of all saints." In his abilities and gifts he was not a whit behind the chiefest apostles, and in sufferings he was more frequent and in labours more abundant than they all. But in respect of worthiness he esteemed them his superiors; for they had not, like him, persecuted the Church, and they were in Christ and became apostles before him. Good Christians in honour prefer one another. True religion will produce self-abasing thoughts. The true convert forgets not his former character. He reflects often on his past guilty life, that he may be more humble in himself, more thankful, more watchful, more diligent.

II. **The apostle expresses his admiring apprehensions of God's grace in calling him to the ministry.**—To the same grace which had called him he ascribes all his furniture for the ministry and all his success. However contemptible some render themselves in the gospel ministry, the office itself is honourable.

III. **The apostle's elevated sentiments concerning the gospel.**—He calls it "the unsearchable riches of Christ." The blessings of the gospel, being purchased by the blood of Christ, are called His riches. They are called riches on account of their excellency, fulness, and variety. They are undiscoverable by human reason, and made known only by revelation. They were but imperfectly made known in the prophetic revelation. They are of inestimable value.

IV. **Consider the grand and enlarged conceptions the apostle entertained of the design and importance of his ministry** (ver. 9).—It was to open to mankind that mighty scheme which the wisdom of God had formed, and which His goodness had for ages been carrying into execution, for the redemption of our fallen race.

His ministry was designed for the benefit, not of men only, but of angels too (ver. 10).—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 8. *Christian Humility illustrated in the Character of Paul.*

I. **The apostle remembered his past sins.**—Wherever there is a quickened conscience, it will prompt the possessor to think of his past sins, and this even when he has reason to believe that they have been forgiven. The apostle continued to remember the natural and deeply seated pride and self-righteousness which he had so long cherished. Allusion is made in every one of his public apologies and in a number of his epistles to the circumstance of his once having been an enemy of the cross of Christ and a persecutor. It is for the benefit of the believer to remember his past sinfulness. The recollection of his infirmities may enable him to guard against their recurrence. Our sins, even when past and forgiven, are apt to leave a prejudicial influence behind. Our sins are like wounds, which even when cured and closed are apt to leave a scar behind. It is most meet and becoming, and in every respect for his own profit and the advantage of the Church and world, that the sinner, and more particularly the man whose former life has been known, should walk humbly before God and his fellow-men all the days of his life. Nor let it be forgotten that the remembrance of past sin is one of the motives impelling the Christian to be "zealously affected in every good thing." The remembrance of the injury he had done to the Church stimulated him to make greater endeavours to benefit it. The persecution which he had inflicted on others made him more steadfast in bearing the sufferings to which he was now exposed. According to the account handed down from the early Church, the apostle had to suffer a violent death in the reign of Nero, when Christians were covered with pitch and burned as torches, or clothed with the skins of wild beasts and dogs let loose upon them. We can conceive that as he saw the terrible preparations for putting him to death, his memory would go back thirty years, and he would remember how he himself had stood by and consented to the death of the holy martyr Stephen, and he would feel himself thereby the more strengthened to endure what the Lord was now pleased to lay upon him.

II. **The apostle mourned over the sin yet cleaving to him.**—He had not only a recollection of past sin, he had a sense of present sin. This sense of indwelling sin is one of the elements that conduce to the onward progress of the believer. Why is it that so many professing Christians, ay, and too many true Christians, are not advancing in the spiritual life; are the same this week as they were the previous week; the same this year as they were the last year; and to all appearance, and unless God arouse them, will be the same the next week or next year as they are this? It is because they are contented with themselves and with their condition, they have reached a state of self-complacency, they have "settled upon their lees," and they do not wish to be disturbed by so much as an allusion to their sin. Very different was the temper of the apostle. Conscious of the sin that still adhered to him, he longed to have it completely exterminated, and sought the heavenly aid which might enable him to reach that after which he was always striving—"unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

III. **The apostle acknowledged God to be the Author of all the gifts and graces possessed by him.**—Paul on more than one occasion found it necessary to speak of his gifts. And when he follows this train of reflection, he arrests himself to explain that his faults are his own, and to ascribe the glory of his gifts to God. There may be circumstances requiring us to speak of our attainments in the spiritual life; but there can be no excuse for our thinking of them or alluding to them in a spirit of complacency. Of all pride, spiritual pride is the most hateful, and the most

lamentably inconsistent. How often does it happen that, when persons are suddenly elevated to places of honour, they see nothing but their own merits, their own talent, their own skill or good management. Elevation of rank thus leads in too many cases to an increase of pride and vanity. This is painfully illustrated in the history of Saul, the son of Kish. Setting out in search of his father's asses, he received before he returned a kingdom for the discharge of the offices of which he had many qualifications. But his rise seems to have fostered the morbid vanity of his mind; and when this was not fed by constant incense, when the Israelites cried; "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands," it led to envy and revenge, which goaded him on to deeds of utter infatuation. How different with Saul of Tarsus! At every step of his elevation in the Church he saw the finger of God, and was the more impressed with his own unworthiness.

IV. **The apostle took a high standard of excellence: he took as his model the law of God and the character of Jesus.**—All actual excellence, whether earthly or spiritual, has been attained by the mind keeping before it and dwelling upon the ideas of the great, the good, the beautiful, the grand, the perfect. The tradesman and mechanic reach the highest eminence by never allowing themselves to rest till they can produce the most finished specimens of their particular craft. The painter and sculptor travel to distant lands that they may see and as it were fill their eye and mind with the sight of the most beautiful models of their arts. Poets have had their yet undiscovered genius awakened into life as they contemplated some of the grandest of nature's scenes; or as they listened to the strains of other poets the spirit of inspiration has descended upon them, as the spirit of inspiration descended on Elisha while the minstrel played before him. The soldier's spirit has been aroused even more by the stirring sound of the war-trumpet than by the record of the courage and heroism of other warriors. The fervour of one patriot has been created as he listened to the burning words of another patriot; and many a martyr's zeal has been kindled at the funeral pile of other martyrs. In this way fathers have handed down their virtues to their children, and those who could leave their offspring no other have in their example left them the very richest legacy; and the deeds of those who perform great achievements have lived far longer than those who do them, and have gone down from one generation to another. Now the believer has such a model set before him in the character of Jesus, which as it were embodies the law and exhibits it in the most attractive and encouraging light. We may copy others in some things; we should copy Christ in all.—*Dr. J. McCosh.*

Ver. 8. *Paul's Humility.*

I. **In what it consisted.**—1. In the unreserved submission of his reason to the authority of revelation. He was a great thinker, and he was a great scholar. 2. In the unwavering reliance of his heart on Christ for the salvation of his soul. Self-righteous by constitution and education. 3. In ascribing to God alone the glory of all that he was and of all that he did. He could not but be conscious how far he stood above the ordinary in point of Christian excellence and supernatural gifts and ministerial usefulness. He never took any part of the praise to himself: "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." 4. In cherishing a sense of his unworthiness and guilt: "Sinners, of whom I am chief." 5. In forming a lowly estimate of his own comparative standing: "Less than the least of all saints."

II. **How it was cultivated.**—1. By frequent meditation on the holiness of God. 2. By looking away from self to Christ. 3. By gratitude to God and to Christ for an interest in the blessings of redemption. 4. By a due appreciation of the importance of humility.

It is ornamental, but it is also useful. It lies at the very root of all the graces of the Christian character.—*G. Brooks.*

Humility a Growth.—The progress which St. Paul made in humility has often been given by comparing three expressions in his epistles with the supposed dates when they were written: "Not meet to be called an apostle" (1 Cor. xv. 9): A.D. 59); "Less than the least of all saints" (Eph. iii. 8: A.D. 64); "Sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. i. 15: A.D. 65).

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ.—The riches of Christ's divinity are unsearchable, the riches of His condescension are unsearchable, the riches of His tenderness are unsearchable, the riches of His redeeming love are unsearchable, the riches of His intercession are unsearchable, the riches of His faithfulness are unsearchable, and the riches of His supporting grace are unsearchable. These riches will never be expressed, even to all eternity. No! not by the noble army of martyrs, nor the glorious company of the apostles, nor the goodly fellowship of the prophets, nor the general assembly and Church of the first-born, nor the innumerable company of angels, nor the spirits of just men made perfect, nor by all the ransomed throng of heaven. It will form their most ecstatic employment in heaven. Join, all ye happy throng—join, holy Abel and Enoch, upright Job, perfect Noah, souls of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, grand souls of Moses, Samuel, and Elijah, pardoned David and Manasseh, soul of Isaiah the prophet. Join, all ye whose souls under the altar cry, "How long, O Lord, wilt Thou not avenge our blood upon the earth?" Join, holy Stephen and Polycarp, holy Latimer, Ridley, Hooper, Rowland Taylor, and Anne Askew. Join, brave Wicklif, gallant Luther, stern John Knox, sweet John Bunyan, and praying George Fox. Join, pious Doddridge and tuneful Watts, noble George Whitefield, holy Fletcher, exhaustless John Wesley, dauntless Rowland Hill, and grand though lowly Robert Hall. Ye sweetest trebles of the eternal choir, ye million million babes who died without actual sin, join all your notes of praise! Pull out every stop of the grand organ of heaven, from the deep swell diapason to the lofty flute and cornet! Gabriel, strike the loftiest note of thy harp of gold. And let all the host of heaven, angels and men, begin the grand anthem, "Worthy is the Lamb." And let the eternal **Amen** peal and roll and reverberate through all the arches of heaven! But never through all eternity shall the gathered host be able fully to express *the unsearchable riches of Christ.*—*Thomas Cooper.*

Ver. 9. *The Fellowship of the Mystery.*

I. It is **a mystery** it should be so long hid; a mystery, because when it was plainly revealed it was not understood by those to whom it was manifested; a mystery, for God was pleased to raise up a special apostle to explain and reveal, to make an epiphany of this great truth—the will of God that all men should be saved, that His gospel should be universally known, should be open to all for acceptance.

II. **Our share and fellowship in the work of the gospel is to make all men see their interest in it,** to make them understand its true catholicity, to make all men see that it is from the first the will of God that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs. By the Church is to be made known the manifold wisdom of God. Every member of the Church is to have his or her part in doing this work. We are all to take part in it by our lives, our conversation, our example, our good works and words. By availing ourselves of opportunities we are to help to make known this manifold wisdom of God.

III. Think for a moment **what is the state of those men who do not know what is their fellowship with this mystery.**—I am not speaking of the entirely ignorant. Even religious people do not half understand or apppreciate

the deep meaning of such words as these. Christianity means expansion, comprehension; it embraces all, and all men must see in it what is the fellowship of the mystery that we have received and that has been made known to us. We must be a light that cannot be hid.—*Bishop Claughton.*

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

The Manifold Wisdom of God—

I. **Seen in the development of a long-cherished plan.**—1. *This plan was carried out by Christ.* "According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ" (ver. 11). The plan is here called the "eternal purpose," and that purpose was the redemption of man, and the personage selected for its accomplishment was the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the unchanging theme of "the gospel of which the apostle was made a minister," this the divinely freighted argosy of "the unsearchable riches of Christ," the veiled and sacred repository of all heavenly mysteries. The plan is significantly called the "manifold wisdom of God"—as manifold as mysterious, for there is variety in the mystery and mystery in every part of the variety. The wisdom is seen, not so much in one act as in the masterly combination of a multitude of acts, all marshalled and disposed with consummate skill to the attainment of one grand end; just as the light that fills and irradiates the valley, penetrating every nook and crevice and clothing every object with beauty, is produced, not by a solitary ray, but by manifold rays poured from the central sun, and all uniting in one harmonious illumination. The crowning wisdom of the plan was in God appointing His only Son as the agent in carrying it out. He, the sinless One, must suffer for sin; the Innocent die for the guilty, and by dying conquer sin. Only thus could the righteous claims of the violated law be fully satisfied, the offence of the sinning one condoned, the authority of the divine government maintained, and the character of the Holy One vindicated to the whole universe.

2. *That the plan has been accomplished is evident from the attitude assumed towards man and towards God by believers* (ver. 13).—As regards the attitude of the believer towards man, he has now "boldness" in declaring the whole truth, and towards God he has "access with confidence by the faith of Him"—he has confidential fellowship with God. Both these experiences are the result of the redeeming plan, and would have been impossible without it.

II. **Seen in the indifference to suffering its revelations inspire.**—"I desire that ye faint not [do not lose heart] at my tribulations for you, which is your glory" (ver. 13). Paul had no anxiety for himself. He almost playfully alludes to his imprisoned state: "The prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles" (ver. 1). His soul was too full of heavenly visions and of the practical bearing of the gospel on the destiny of the race to be harassed about his personal suffering. When he thought about it at all it was to rejoice in the honour of being allowed to suffer for such a cause, and in the opportunities afforded of spreading the gospel in quarters that might otherwise have been closed to him. But the Church feared for their champion's life, and was troubled about his prolonged sufferings and imprisonment. The apostle assures his friends there was more reason for joyous boasting than for pity and dread. The sufferings and misfortunes of the Church have been overruled in promoting her enlargement. The flames of the martyrs have illumined the truth, and the captivity of its professors has prepared the throne of its universal empire. Personal religion has grown stronger by opposition and suffering, and the Church has multiplied by the very means which were intended to destroy her.

III. **Seen in making the Church of the redeemed the means of instructing the heavenly intelligences** (ver. 10).—These lofty beings, with their vast know-

ledge and gigantic powers, learn something from the divine treatment of sinful, rebellious men. They gain new light, fresher and more expansive views, regarding the character and perfections of God; and perhaps the chief point on which their angelic knowledge will be increased is in the glorious revelations the gospel unfolds of the infinite love of God. The Church on earth, with all its contradictions and imperfections, presents a magnificent picture of self-denial, devotion, and praise; but this is only a faint representation of the splendour of the Church above in its more completed state. The Church above is society organised; the Church below is society organising. The heavenly intelligences are watching both processes, and their wondering adoration is being continually excited as they observe the building up and ever-advancing completion of the redeemed community. If there is one thing more than another that amazes "the principalities and powers"—amazes them more than the manifold wisdom of God unfolded to them by the Church—it must surely be the apathy and indifference of men on earth to their redemptive blessings!—that so much has been done to make man wise, and he remains willingly and contentedly ignorant; that God has been so prodigal of His wealth, and man is so slow to appreciate and seize the proffered enrichment; that God offers the abundant bread of eternal life, and man prefers to starve in lean and comfortless poverty, and grumbles against heaven that he is so poor; that salvation is pressed on his acceptance, and man persists in perishing; that "heaven lies about him in his infancy," and the celestial gate opens before him in every subsequent stage of life, and yet man resists the alluring glory, and stumbles at last into the bottomless chasm of eternal darkness.

Lessons.—1. *The wisdom of God is continually presenting new illustrations of its manifoldness.* 2. *The most signal display of divine wisdom is seen in the redemption of the race.* 3. *The future history of the Church will reveal new features in the manifold wisdom of God.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 10. *The Manifold Wisdom of God—*

I. **Seen in the gradual unfolding of His great purpose to save the human race.**—1. This process suited the revelation to men's nature and condition as finite and sinful beings. Had the revelation been more rapid and brilliant it could not have been so readily appreciated, nor could men have dared to hope they had any share in it. It was adapted to the infantile state of the Church and the world when the mind is most powerfully affected by sensible objects. 2. This method was a training for appreciating the fuller discoveries of the divine will. It has been an education and discipline, has provoked inquiry, and encouraged full submission to the will of God and faith in His wisdom and power.

II. **Seen in the means He employed to carry out His saving purpose.**—1. By the gift of His Son. 2. As a subsidiary means, by the institution of preaching, and by selecting men, and not angels, as instruments in spreading the knowledge of gospel redemption.

III. **Seen in using the Church of the redeemed as an object-lesson in teaching the heavenly intelligences.**—The Church teaches the angels: 1. By its composition. 2. By its marvellous history. 3. By its glorious completion.

Learn.—1. *The dignity and glory of the Church.* 2. *Let it be your all-important concern to become a member of this spiritual community.*

Vers. 11-13. *Access to God.*

I. **We have access.**—The word signifies an approach to some object. Here it intends a near approach to God in worship, or such a state of peace with God as allows a freedom of intercourse. It is a familiar expres-

sion suited to convey the idea of great condescension on God's part and high privilege on ours.

II. **We have boldness of access.**—The word signifies a freedom of speaking in opposition to that restraint which we feel when in the presence of one we dread and in whose goodness we can place no confidence. It expresses the fulness of that liberty which under the gospel all Christians enjoy of drawing near to God, and that freedom of spirit with which we should come to God. The disposition of our hearts should correspond with the liberal and gracious dispensation under which we are placed. We should come to God with a spirit of love, in opposition to servile fear. This boldness imports frequency in our approaches to God. Slaves, under fear, stand at a distance. Children, invited by the goodness of a father, come often into his presence.

III. **We have access with confidence.**—This confidence is elsewhere called a better hope and the full assurance of faith. It is opposed to doubting and distrust. Confidence in prayer is a full reliance on God; but this may be accompanied with a humble diffidence of ourselves.

IV. **All our hope of success in prayer must rest upon the mediation of Christ** (ver. 12).—In His name we are to come before God; and in the virtue of His atonement and intercession we may hope for acceptance.

V. **Access to God a refuge in trouble** (ver. 13).—Fearing lest his sufferings in the cause of the gospel should dishearten his converts, the apostle sets before them a view of their security under the protection of divine grace. Dangers were before them; but what had they to fear who had boldness of access to God? It was one of the glories of their religion that He who preached it was not ashamed to suffer for it.

Lessons.—1. *In the apostle Paul we have a noble example of benevolence.* 2. *New converts should be assisted and encouraged.* 3. *Our best support under trouble is boldness of access to God.* 4. *Let the grace and condescension of God encourage us to come often into His presence.*—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 12. *Access to God in Prayer.*—Prayer is to be exercised with the greatest caution and exactness, being the most solemn intercourse earth can have with heaven. The distance between God and us, so great by nature and yet greater by sin, makes it fearful to address Him; but Christ has smoothed a way, and we are commanded to come with a good heart, not only in respect of innocence, but also of confidence.

I. **There is a certain boldness and confidence very well becoming our humblest addresses to God.**—It is the very language of prayer to treat God as our Father. The nature of this confidence is not so easily set forth by positive description as by the opposition it bears to its extremes. It is opposed: 1. To desperation and horror of conscience. 2. To doubtings and groundless scrupulosities. 3. To rashness and precipitation. 4. To impudence.

II. **The foundation of this confidence is laid in the mediation of Christ.**

III. **The reason why Christ's mediation ought to minister such confidence to us.**—His incomparable fitness for the performance of that work. Considering Him: 1. In respect to God, with whom He has to mediate. God sustains a double capacity of Father and Judge. Christ appears not only as an Advocate, but as a Surety, paying down the utmost justice can exact. 2. In reference to men for whom He mediates. He is a friend, brother, surety, lord or master. 3. In respect to Himself. (1) He is perfectly acquainted with all our wants and necessities. (2) He is heartily sensible of and concerned about them. (3) He is best able to express and set them before the Father.

IV. **Whether there is any other ground that may rationally embolden us in our addresses to Him.**—If there

is, it must be either: 1. Something within us as the merit of our good actions. But this cannot be—(1) because none can merit but by doing something absolutely by his own power for the advantage of him from whom he merits; (2) because to merit is to do something over and above what is due. 2. Something without us. This must be the help and intercession either of angels or saints. Angels cannot mediate for us—(1) because it is impossible for them to know and perfectly discern the thoughts; (2) because no angel can know at once all the prayers that are even uttered in words throughout the world. These arguments are still more forcible against the intercession of saints. The invocation of saints supposed to arise: 1. From the solemn meetings used by the primitive Christians at the saints' sepulchres, and there celebrating the memory of their martyrdom. 2. From those seeds of the Platonic philosophy that so much leavened many of the primitive Christians. 3. From the people being bred in idolatry. But the primitive fathers held no such thing; and the Council of Trent, that pretended to determine the case, put the world off with an ambiguity. Christ is the only true way.—*R. South.*

Ver. 13. *Courage under Suffering.*—1. Affliction and tribulation for the gospel is a trial not only to those under it, but to others who look on, and are in no less hazard to be thereby brangled (made to disagree) in their confidence, blunted in their zeal, and rendered remiss in their forwardness, than the person himself who suffers. 2. A faithful minister suffering for truth will not be so solicitous for his own outward estate as for the Church and people of God, lest they be turned aside, or made to faint by reason of his sufferings. This may guard from discouragement when we consider the excellent worth of truth, and how those who suffer for it have not cast themselves without necessity upon their sufferings, but were necessitated to meet them in the way of their calling. 3. So honourable is it to suffer for Christ and truth that not only the persons who suffer are honoured, but also all such as have interest in them, who should not faint, but rather glory in them and take encouragement from them.—*Fergusson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 14—21.

A Sublime and Comprehensive Prayer—

I. For spiritual strengthening (ver. 16).—The first necessity of the new convert is strength. The change from the former life is so new and strange. The spiritual faculties are but recently called into exercise; and though they are thrilled with the vigour of youth, they possess the inherent weakness and are exposed to the temptations of youth. Their newly acquired strength is at once their glory and their danger—their glory in giving them the capacity and impulse for the highest kind of work; their danger because they are tempted to rely upon their own conscious power rather than upon the grace of God within them, which is the source of their best strength. If that strength is once undermined or eaten away, it can never be replaced. The strength of youth, physical or spiritual, belongs only to the period of youth; if lost in youth, it can never be regained in maturer life. Whatever strength we may gain in after-years will never be what it might have been if we had never lost the strength of our first love. The apostle here prays that his converts may be invigorated with a manful courage, the moral strength to meet dangers and to battle with difficulties without quailing.

1. *This spiritual strengthening is achieved by the indwelling Christ welcomed and retained in the heart by faith.*—"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (ver. 17). The source of this strength is not in us; we cannot evoke it by any

voluntary effort of our own. It is a divine power working in us (ver. 20). It is the Christ within us making Himself felt in our otherwise enfeebled powers. We are invested with the strength of Christ by our faith in Christ; and increase of strength comes with increase of faith. The faith that receives Christ into the heart must be constantly exercised to keep Him there, and to derive inspiration and help from Him in attaining spiritual growth and in doing useful work.

2. *This spiritual strengthening is cherished by an accession of Christian love.*—"That ye, being rooted and grounded in love" (ver. 17). The double metaphor gives emphasis to the idea—"rooted," a tree; "grounded" a building. When Christ is planted and settled in our hearts, love is shed abroad there, and becomes the genial soil in which our graces grow, and the basis of all our thought and action. Love is strength, the most reliable, sustaining, and victorious kind of strength.

II. **For a clearer comprehension of the immeasurable love of Christ** (vers. 18, 19).—Here the prayer rises in sublimity and comprehensiveness. The apostle prays that we may know the unknowable—"know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." There is nothing so fascinating as the love of Christ, ever leading us on by fresh revelations, and ever leaving the impression that there are unfathomable depths and inaccessible heights yet to be discovered. "Oh that Christ would," exclaimed the saintly Rutherford, "arrest and comprise my love and my heart for all. I am a bankrupt who have no more free goods in the world for Christ, save that it is both the whole heritage I have, and all my moveables besides. Lord, give the thirsty manna drink. Oh to be over ears in the well! Oh to be swimming over head and ears in Christ's love! I would not have Christ's love entering in me, but I would enter into it, and be swallowed up of that love. But I see not myself here, for I fear I make more of His love than of Himself, whereas He Himself is far beyond and much better than His love. Oh, if I had my sinful arms filled with that lovely one Christ! Blessed be my rich Lord Jesus, who sendeth not away beggars from His house with an empty dish. He filleth the vessel of such as will come and seek. We might beg ourselves rich, if we were wise, if we would but hold out our withered hands to Christ, and learn to seek, ask, and knock." The highest conceptions of the love of Christ are realised by the soul that prays.

III. **For the attainment of the most complete endowment of the divine fulness.**—"That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (ver. 19). The prayer asks that man may gain the sum-total of God's gifts, be filled in every capacity of his nature with the whole plenitude (the πλήρωμα) of God. To reach this glorious result, we need, indeed, special spiritual strengthening. New wine bursts old bottles; and a large and sudden inflow of divine grace would be disastrous to the soul unprepared to receive it. What is wanted is strength—strength of the highest and purest kind. Muscular strength—a magnificent healthy physique—is a great gift; but it is one of our lowest endowments, and its abuse sinks us to a worse than brutish sensuality. Intellectual strength is a still higher gift, and if rightly used will lift us into a loftier world of wonders, of beauty, of purity and joy; but if abused will drag us down to the base level of the vapouring, scoffing sceptic, whose attempts to glorify error are instigated by a savage but utterly powerless hatred of truth. Spiritual strength is the highest gift of all. It is the motive-power that gives movement and direction to thought and action. Without it man is the plaything and victim of unrestrained passions. A short time ago I inspected one of the finest ocean-going steamships, a marvellous combination of strength and elegance. Everything seemed as perfect as engineering science could make it. But there was something wanting; it was a fatal defect. The giant shaft and powerful screw, the triple expansion cylinders, the cranks, pistons, and wheels were all there, but the noble vessel was

useless, heaving helplessly on the rolling tide. The fires were out, and the active driving-power was lacking. What steam is to that great floating mass of complicated mechanism, giving it life, movement, direction, purpose—that spiritual strength is to our mental and physical organism. To receive the fulness of indwelling Deity the soul must be strengthened with spiritual strength. We cannot pray too earnestly for this.

IV. **Uttered with a reverential recognition of the great Giver of all blessing.**—1. *Beginning with the submissive awe of a humble suppliant.* "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father," etc. (vers. 14, 15). The apostle is overwhelmed with the contemplation of the rich blessings stored up for man in Christ Jesus, and prostrates himself with lowly homage in the conscious presence of the great Donor of all spiritual good. Nothing humbles us more than a sight of the blessings possible of attainment by the greatest sinner.

2. *Ending with an outburst of triumphant praise* (vers. 20, 21).—Praise soars higher than prayer. Man's desires will never overtake God's bounty. When the apostle desires that God's praise may resound in the Church "throughout all ages," he no longer supposes that the mystery of God may be finished speedily as men count years. The history of mankind stretches before his gaze into its dim futurity. The successive generations gather themselves into that consummate age of the kingdom of God, the grand cycle in which all the ages are contained. With its completion time itself is no more. Its swelling current, laden with the tribute of all the worlds and all their histories, reaches the eternal ocean. The end comes; God is all in all. At this furthest horizon of thought, Christ and His own are seen together rendering to God unceasing glory (*Findlay*).

Lessons.—1. *Prayer is the cry of conscious need.* 2. *Increases in importunity as it is strengthened by faith.* 3. *Finds its sublimest themes in the culture of the spiritual life.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 14, 15. *The Christian Church a Family.*

I. **The definition here given of the Christian Church.**—1. *A society founded upon natural affinities—"a family."* A family is built on affinities which are natural, not artificial; it is not a combination, but a society. In ancient times an association of interest combined men in one guild or corporation for protecting the common persons in that corporation from oppression. In modern times identity of political creed or opinion has bound men together in one league in order to establish those political principles which appeared to them of importance. Similarity of taste has united men together in what is called an association, or a society, in order by this means to attain more completely the ends of that science to which they had devoted themselves. But, as these have been raised artificially, so their end is, inevitably, dissolution. Society passes on, and guilds and corporations die; principles are established, and leagues become dissolved; tastes change, and then the association or society breaks up and comes to nothing. It is upon another principle altogether that that which we call a family, or true society, is formed. It is not built upon similarity of taste nor identity of opinion, but upon affinities of nature. You do not choose who shall be your brother; you cannot exclude your mother or your sister; it does not depend upon choice or arbitrary opinion at all, but is founded upon the eternal nature of things. And precisely in the same way is the Christian Church formed—upon natural affinity, and not upon artificial combination.

2. *The Church of Christ is a whole made up of manifold diversities.*—We are told here it is "the whole family," taking into it the great and good of

ages past now in heaven, and also the struggling, the humble, and the weak now existing upon earth. Here, again, the analogy holds good between the Church and the family. Never more than in the family is the true entirety of our nature seen. Observe how all the diversities of human condition and character manifest themselves in the family. First of all, there are the two opposite pales of masculine and feminine, which contain within them the entire of our humanity; which together, not separately, make up the whole of man. Then there are the diversities in the degrees and kinds of affection. For, when we speak of family affection, we must remember that it is made up of many diversities. There is nothing more different than the love which the sister bears towards the brother, compared with that which the brother bears towards the sister. The affection which a man bears towards his father is quite distinct from that which he feels towards his mother; it is something quite different towards his sister; totally diverse, again, towards his brother. And then there are diversities of character. First, the mature wisdom and stern integrity of the father, then the exuberant tenderness of the mother. And then one is brave and enthusiastic, another thoughtful, and another tender. One is remarkable for being full of rich humour; another is sad, mournful, even melancholy. Again, besides these, there are diversities of condition in life. First, there is the heir, sustaining the name and honour of the family; then perchance the soldier, in whose career all the anxiety and solicitude of the family is centred; then the man of business, to whom they look up, trusting his advice, expecting his counsel; lastly, perhaps, there is the invalid, from the very cradle trembling between life and death, drawing out all the sympathies and anxieties of each member of the family, and so uniting them all more closely, from their having one common point of sympathy and solicitude. Now, you will observe that these are not accidental, but absolutely essential to the idea of a family; for so far as any one of them is lost, so far the family is incomplete. And precisely in the same way all these diversities of character and condition are necessary to constitute and complete the idea of a Christian Church.

3. *The Church of Christ is a society which is for ever shifting its locality and altering its forms.*—It is the whole Church, "the whole family in heaven and earth." So, then, those who were on earth and are now in heaven are members of the same family still. Those who had their home here, now have it there. The Church of Christ is a society ever altering and changing its external forms. "The whole family"—the Church of the patriarchs and of ages before them; and yet the same family. Remember, I pray you, the diversities of form through which, in so many ages and generations, this Church has passed. Consider the difference there was between the patriarchal Church of the time of Abraham and Isaac and its condition under David; or the difference between the Church so existing and its state in the days of the apostles and the marvellous difference between that and the same Church four or five centuries later; or, once again, the difference between that, externally one, and the Church as it exists in the present day, broken into so many fragments. Yet, diversified as these states may be, they are not more so than the various stages of a family.

II. **Consider the name by which this Church is named.**—"Our Lord Jesus Christ," the apostle says, of whom "the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

1. *First, the recognition of a common father.*—That is the sacred truth proclaimed by the Epiphany. God revealed in Christ—not the Father of the Jew only, but also of the Gentile. The Father of a whole family. Not the partial Father, loving one alone—the elder—but the younger son besides; the outcast

prodigal who had spent his living with harlots and sinners, but the child still, and the child of a Father's love.

2. *The recognition of a common humanity.*—He from whom the Church is named took upon Him not the nature merely of the noble, of kings, or of the intellectual philosopher, but of the beggar, the slave, the outcast, the infidel, the sinner, and the nature of every one struggling in various ways.

3. *The Church of Christ proceeds out of and rests upon the belief in a common Sacrifice.—F. W. Robertson.*

The Family in Heaven and Earth.—With the boldness of a true and inspired nature the apostle Paul speaks with incidental ease of one family distributed between heaven and earth. There is, it seems, domesticity that cannot be absorbed by the interval between two spheres of being—a love that cannot be lost amidst the immensity, but finds the surest track across the void—a home affinity that penetrates the skies, and enters as the morning or evening guest. And it is Jesus of Nazareth who has effected this; has entered under the same household name, and formed into the same class, the dwellers above and those beneath. Spirits there, and spirits here, are gathered by Him into one group; and where before was saddest exile, He has made a blest fraternity.

I. **Members of the same home cannot dwell together, without either the memory or the expectation of some mutual and mortal farewell.**—All we who dwell in this visible scene can think of kindred souls that have vanished from us into the invisible. These, in the first place, does Jesus keep dwelling near our hearts; making still one family of those in heaven and those on earth. This He would do, if by no other means, by the prospect He has opened, of actual restoration. And since the grave can bury no affection now, but only the mortal and familiar shape of their object, death has changed its whole aspect and relation to us; and we may regard it, not with passionate hate, but with quiet reverence. It is a divine message from above, not an invasion from the abyss beneath; not the fiendish hand of darkness thrust up to clutch our gladness enviously away, but a rainbow gleam that descends through Jesus, without which we should not know the various beauties that are woven into the pure light of life. Once let the Christian promise be taken to the heart, and as we walk through the solemn forest of our existence, every leaf of love that falls, while it proclaims the winter near, lets in another patch of God's sunshine to paint the glade beneath our feet and give a glory to the grass. Tell me that I shall stand face to face with the sainted dead; and, whenever it may be, shall I not desire to be ready, and to meet them with clear eye and spirit unabashed? Such and so much encouragement would Christianity give to the faithful conversation of all true affections, if it only assured us of some distant and undefinable restoration. But it appears to me to assure us of much more than this; to discountenance the idea of any, even the most temporary, extinction of life in the grave; and to sanction our faith in the absolute immortality of the mind. Rightly understood, it teaches not only that the departed will live, but that they do live, and indeed have never died, but simply vanished and passed away.

II. But it is not merely the members of the same literal home that Christ unites in one, whether in earth or heaven. **He makes the good of every age into a glorious family of the children of God**; and inspires them with a fellow-feeling, whatever the department of service which they fill. Keeping us ever in the mental presence of the divinest wisdom and in veneration of a perfect goodness, it accustoms us to the aspect of every grace that can adorn and consecrate our nature; trains our perceptions instantly to recognise its influence or to feel its want. It looks with an eye of full

and clear affection over the wide circle of human excellence. Such hope tends to give us a prompt and large congeniality with them; to cherish the healthful affections which are domestic in every place and obsolete in no time; to prepare us for entering any new scene, and joining any new society where goodness, truth, and beauty dwell.—*Martineau.*

The Christian Brotherhood of Man.—The brotherhood of man has been the dream of old philosophers, and its attainment the endeavour of modern reformers. Man can only reach his highest life when he forms part of a society bound together by common sympathies and common aims, for by a great law of our nature it is true that he who lives utterly apart from his fellows must lose all true nobleness in selfish degradation. There is no real progress for the individual but through social sympathy. There is no strong and enduring aspiration but in the fellowship of aspiring souls. That conviction which men have so strongly felt and so vainly endeavoured to realise is perpetually asserted in the Book of God.

I. **The brotherhood of man in Christ.**—1. *The Christian brotherhood is a unity of spirit under a diversity of form.* Thus with the Church of the first century. At first it was one band of brotherhood; but as it grew and individual thought expanded and experience deepened there arose infinite diversities. The more men think and the more they grow, the more will they differ.

2. *There are spiritual ties in action which in Christ bind man to man.*—Paul's words imply a threefold unity. 1. The fellowship of devotion to a common Father. 2. The fellowship with Christ our common Brother. 3. That fellowship is unbroken by the change of worlds.

II. **Results of realising this fact of brotherhood.**—1. *Earnestness of life.*

2. *Power and grandeur of hope.*—Some complain that their ideas of heaven are vague and ineffective. Only realise the brotherhood of man, and then the hope of the future will become a power in life.—*E. L. Hull.*

The One Family.—1. Believers on earth and saints and angels in heaven spring from the same common parent. 2. Are governed by the same general laws. 3. Share in the same pleasures and enjoyments. 4. Have the same general temper, the same distinguishing complexion. 5. Have one common interest. 6. Look to, rely upon, and are guided by the same Head. 7. Are all objects of God's love. 8. At the last day will meet in God's presence, be openly acknowledged as His children, and admitted to dwell in His house for ever.

Lessons.—1. *If we estimate the dignity of men from the families with which they are connected, how honourable is the believer!* 2. *We see our obligations to mutual condescension, peaceableness, and love.* 3. *Let those who are not of this family be solicitous to obtain a place in it.—Lathrop.*

Vers. 16-19. *Paul's Prayer for the Ephesians.*

I. **For spiritual strength.**—It was not bodily strength, civil power, or worldly distinction; it was the grace of fortitude and patience.

II. **For an indwelling Christ.**—As we become united to Christ by faith, so by faith He dwells in our hearts.

III. **For establishment in love.**—True love is rooted in the heart. It is a spiritual affection towards Christ. Its fruits are love to men, imitation of Christ's example, obedience to His commands, zeal for His honour, and diligence in His service.

IV. **For increase of knowledge in the love of Christ.**—The love of Christ passeth all known examples of love. This love passeth our comprehension in respect of its breadth or extent, its length, its depth, as the benefits it has procured exceed all human estimate. Though the love of Christ passeth knowledge, there is a sense in which it

is known to the saints. They have an experimental knowledge, an influential knowledge, an assimilating knowledge of the love of Christ.

V. **For the fulness of God.**—That they may have such a supply of divine influence as would cause them to abound in knowledge, faith, love, and all virtues and good works.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 19. *The Love of Christ.*

I. **The love of Christ passeth knowledge.**—1. *He Himself furnishes an illustrative instance* when He says, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die"—a merely just and righteous man would be admired; but he would not so take hold of the heart of another to produce a willingness to die for him;—"yet peradventure," in some rare case, "for a good man," a man of benevolence, adorned with the softer virtues and abounding in the distribution of his favours—for such a one "some would even dare to die"; some one, overcoming even the love of life in the fulness of his gratitude, might venture to give his own life to preserve that of such a one. But we were neither just nor good; we were sinners, and "God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Passes it not, then, all knowledge, all reasonable conception and probability, that this fallen nature should be so sympathised with that these flagrant rebellions should excite, not an inexorable anger, but pity and love? And such love that our Saviour—looking not so much on man as offending, but as His creature, and as His creature still capable of restoration—should melt in compassion and die to effect his redemption; this is indeed love "that passeth knowledge."

2. *The manner in which this love is manifested carries the principle beyond all conception and expression.*—It was love to the death. It was death for sinners, death in their stead; death, that the penal claims of law, and that law the unchangeable, unrelaxable law of God, might be fully satisfied. The redemption price was fixed by a spotless justice, and the love of Christ to the sinner was to be tested by the vastness of the claims to be made upon Him. But the wages of sin is death; and His love shrank not from the full and awful satisfaction required. It was death in our stead. Then it must be attended with anxious forebodings. Of what mysteries have I suggested the recollection to you? Can you comprehend them? That feeling with which He spoke of the baptism of blood? That last mysterious agony? That complaint of being forsaken of God? You feel you cannot. They transcend all your thought; and the love which made Him stoop to them is therefore love "which passeth knowledge."

3. The love of Christ passeth knowledge if we consider it *as illustrated by that care for us which signalises His administration.*

4. The subject is further *illustrated by the nature of the blessings which result to men from the love of Christ.*—We usually estimate the strength of love by the blessings it conveys or, at any rate, would convey. And if the benefits be beyond all estimate, neither can we measure the love.

5. *The love of Christ passeth knowledge because it is the love of an infinite nature.* Love rises with the other qualities and perfections of the being in whom it is found. Among animals the social attachments are slight, and the instinctive affection dies away when its purposes are answered. In man love arises with his intellect. In him it is often only limited by his nature, and when rightly directed shall be eternal. Many that love on earth shall doubtless love for ever. Were Christ merely a man His love could not pass knowledge. What man has felt man can conceive. Love can be measured by the nature which exercises it. But this love passeth all knowledge but that of the divine nature, because itself is divine. Christ is God, and he who would fully know His love must be able to span immensity and to grasp the Infinite Himself.

II **But while it is true that the love of Christ passeth all knowledge, it is equally true that it is to be known by us.**—To know the love of Christ is: 1. *To recognise it in its various forms and expressions in our constant meditations.* And where shall we turn and not be met by this, to us, most important subject? How delightful an occupation, to track all the streams of mercy up to their source. We are surrounded by the proof of the love of Christ. Let us see to it that the blinding veil be not on our heart, that our eyes be not holden that we should not know Him. We are called to know the love of Christ. Let us accustom ourselves to reflect upon it, to see it in its various forms and results; and then shall our meditation of Him be sweet. 2. To know the love of Christ is *to perceive it in its adaptation to our own personal condition.* 3. To know the love of Christ is *to experience it in its practical results.* He offers you pardon, and the offer is a proof and manifestation of His love; but properly to know it pardon itself must be accepted and embraced. This is to know His love. Seek it, and you must find it. Rest without it, and you are but "as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." 4. To know the love of Christ we must *put forth those efforts through which that love is appointed to express itself in our daily experience.*

Lessons.—1. *The rejection of love, especially of redeeming love, involves the deepest guilt.* 2. *Remember that the grace is common to you all.*—*R. Watson.*

The Unknown and Known Love of Christ.

I. **There are some respects in which the love of Christ passeth our knowledge.**—1. In its objects; so unworthy and degraded. 2. In its sufferings; love to the death. 3. In its care. 4. In its blessings. 5. In its degree. It is the love of an infinite nature.

II. **There are some respects in which the love of Christ may be known.**—1. Our views of it may be clearer and more consistent. 2. Our views of it may be more confidential and appropriating. 3. Our views of it may be more impressive and more influential.—*G. Brooks.*

The Transcendent Love of Christ.

I. **This representation must be confirmed.**—1. This love is divine. 2. Consider the objects it embraced. 3. The means by which it manifested itself. 4. The blessings it secured.

II. **The perception the Christian may acquire of this love, notwithstanding its divine infinitude.**—1. It is the great interpreting principle which he applies to all the tremendous facts of redemption. 2. The sacred element and incentive of all piety—the theme of contemplation, the ground of confidence, the motive of obedience. 3. The impulse and model of all benevolence and zeal.

III. **Conclusions from a review of the subject.**—1. It is only natural to expect a transcendent character in Christianity. 2. No better test exists of what is genuine Christianity than the level of the views which it exhibits concerning the person and work of Christ and the tone of the affections which it encourages towards Him. 3. There is much of implicit as well as declarative evidence in support of the Saviour's supreme divinity. 4. How necessary is it that we should live habitually under the influence of this transcendent love.—*R. W. Hamilton.*

Vers. 20, 21. *A Devout Doxology.*

I. **The acknowledgment the apostle makes of God's all-sufficiency.**—1. God often does for men those favours which they never thought of asking for themselves. 2. God answers prayers in ways we think not of. 3. The mercies God is pleased to grant often produce consequences far beyond what we asked or thought. 4. The worth of the blessings we ask and God bestows infinitely exceeds all our thought.

II. **The ascription of glory the apostle makes to this all-sufficient God.**—1. God is glorified by the in-

crease of His Church. 2. God is glorified in the Church when a devout regard is paid to the ordinances He has instituted. 3. By the observance of good order in the Church, and by the decent attendance of the members on their respective duties. 4. That God may be glorified there must be peace and unity in the Church.—*Lathrop.*

God's Infinite Liberality.

I. **The object of this doxology.**—The God of all grace. Whatever we think we ask. No limit to our asking but our thinking. God gives beyond our thinking. Here, take all this! Ah, poor thing, that transcends thine asking and even thy thinking, but take it. If it transcend all communicated power of mind, I say, "I thank Thee, my God, for it. I know it is exceeding good, but I cannot understand it. Keep it among Thy treasures. My blessedness rests not in my intellect, but in Thy favour. Remember Thou hast given it me. It may come I shall be able to understand it better and appreciate it more." I shall never have asked too much, I shall never have thought too much, till I have asked beyond God's ability, till I have thought beyond God's ability. That ability is not a bare abstraction of the omnipotence of God, but it is the omnipotence of God as working in the Church and in the people of God. He is not omnipotent in heaven, and impotent in thee, or partially powerful in thee.

II. **The doxology itself** (ver. 21).—All should glorify God, but all will not. In the Church alone will God get glory. It is as the name of Christ is glorified in us that we are glorified in Him. It is when the glory that God reflects on the creature is by the creature ascribed as due only to God when He is glorified as the Author of it, transcendently and infinitely glorious, it is then that the glory rests. When it is appropriated it is lost, but it is possessed when it is tossed back and fro between God and the creature. When the creature gives it to God, God of His rich grace sends it back in greater measure; but the humble creature, emulous of God's glory, sends it all back again to Him, and as it reciprocates so it increases. God gives not to end by enriching us—that is an immediate end; but the ultimate end is that He may be glorified. Be ashamed to get little—get all things. Get out of your poverty, not by fancying you are rich, but by coming and getting. The more you get always give glory, and come and ask and receive.—*Dr. John Duncan.*

CHAPTER IV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Walk worthy of the vocation.**—They had been called to life in the Spirit, and they must also "walk in the Spirit."

Ver. 2. **With all lowliness.**—The Christian—"born from above"—is to exhibit a trait of character which the "high-born" Greek despised, and which Heine in modern times called "a hound's virtue." "The pride that apes humility" steals in under Chrysostom's description of this "lowliness." He says, "It is a making of ourselves small when we are great." **And meekness.**—"A grace in advance of 'lowliness,' not as more precious than it, but as presupposing it, and as being unable to exist without it" (*Trench*). **With long-suffering.**—The exact opposite of our "short-tempered"—*e.g.* "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" means "Has the Lord become irritable?" (Mic. ii. 7). The word suggests to men by nature irascible that "slowness to wrath" recommended by St. James. **Forbearing**

one another in love.—The brother who is tempted to anger is not to look down from the height of a lofty pride on those who try his patience, but in compassionate love, remembering his own frailty, must "suffer long and be kind."

Ver. 3. **Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**—It is no easy-going indifference that is inculcated; they will have to "exert themselves," "give diligence" (R.V.), before that peace obtains which is the harmonious and frictionless working of each part of the machine.

Vers. 4-6. **One body . . . and in you all.**—"Seven elements of unity St. Paul enumerates. . . . They form a chain stretching from the Church on earth to the throne and being of the universal Father in heaven" (*Findlay*).

Ver. 7. **But unto every one of us is given grace.**—The distributing Spirit (1 Cor. xii. 11) leaves no humblest member of the body of Christ without his endowment.

Ver. 8. **Wherefore He saith.**—What follows is a quotation of Ps. lxviii. 18 "with free alteration" (*Meyer*), adapting the return of the hero-king to his own city to that most magnificent of all triumphs—over Hades and Death—achieved by Him "who was dead and is alive for evermore." "Being by the right hand of God exalted He hath poured forth this" abundance, as a conqueror scatters his largess.

Vers. 9, 10. **Now that He ascended . . . that He might fill all things.**—The exaltation, in His case, presupposed the humiliation. From the throne of the universe—"the glory which He had with the Father"—to the profoundest depths where any poor lost piece of humanity that is redeemable can be found, and thence again to the throne He relinquished. **The same also.**—Exalted, to be confidingly and adoringly loved; humbled, to be worshipped no less as "the Son of man who is in heaven."

Ver. 11. **And He gave some to be, etc.**—"Christ gave the persons, and the community gave to them the service" (*Meyer*). **Apostles . . . prophets . . . evangelists.**—We cannot accept the order as significant of rank. It would grace an angel to be the "evangelist" of such a salvation. As apostles they went forth "sent" by their Master to men in their need; as prophets they "spoke out" what He had taught them; as evangelists they were the messengers of *good* tidings. They were apostles that they might be evangelists (Matt. x. 5-7), "going about heralding" the kingdom and gathering men into it. **Pastors and teachers.**—Shepherds and instructors of those gathered together by men of another order. These are the true "bishops," whatever "other name" they bear (1 Pet. v. 1-4).

Ver. 12. **For the perfecting of the saints.**—"Saints," whilst a title of the highest honour, is often expressive of the ideal rather than the real life of those who bear it; the "perfecting" is the rendering into actual life of what is implied in the term of honour. **For the work of the ministry.**—R.V. "*into* the work." If the end of all Christ's gifts so far as "the saints" are concerned is their perfect equipment, so far as His messengers are concerned they go forth unto service first, honour afterwards. **For the edifying of the body of Christ.**—Practically the same as the foregoing, but with an ultimate reference to Christ. The double figure of a building and of a body is familiar to our own speech, as when we speak of "building up a strong frame."

Ver. 13. **Till we all come.**—Suggestive of standing opposite to something towards which we have been toiling. Can one think, without a tremor of joy, of the moment when he will find himself in perfect correspondence with the divine Archetype? **In the unity of the faith.**—The world has seen many attempts to bring about uniformity of creed, after the manner of Procrustes, by stretching or chopping. "The unity of the faith" is a very different thing, and much to be desired. **The knowledge of the Son of God.**—Lit. the complete knowledge. **Unto a full-grown man.**—As above intimated, a child does not become a man by means of the rack. The significance of the word "man" here is as great as when we bid some one who has lost his self-respect to "be a man."

Ver. 14. **That we henceforth be no more children.**—In what respects his readers are not to be children the apostle makes plain, viz. in helplessness and credulity. **Tossed to and fro.**—With no more power of resistance than a cork on the waves. **By the sleight of men and cunning craftiness.**—As some poor simpleton, who thinks himself capable, falls a victim to card-sharpers, so unstable souls fall victims to those who say with Falstaff, "If the young dace be a bite for the old pike, I see no reason in the law of nature but I may snap at him."

Ver. 15. **But speaking the truth in love.**—If it be possible to make the medicine palatable without destroying its efficacy—to capsule the bitter pill—its chances are so much the greater of doing good. The A.V. margin gives "being sincere," and the R.V. "dealing truly," the different renderings indicating the difficulty of finding an English equivalent. **May grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ.**—The embodied Truth of God, who could say without blasphemy, "I am—not simply I teach—the Truth."

Ver. 16. **Fitly joined together and compacted.**—R.V. "fitly framed and knit together." Bengel suggests that the first expression means the *fitting* together, and the second the *fastening* together. Meyer, denying this, says the distinction is that the former corresponds

to the *figure*, the latter to the *thing* represented. The grammar, like the physiology, of this verse is difficult. Are we to read, "The whole body . . . maketh increase of the body"? Apparently we must, for the body "*builds itself* up in love."

Ver. 17. **That ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk.**—In this and the two following verses we have again the lurid picture of ii. 2, 3: "in the vanity of their mind."

"The creature is their sole delight,
Their happiness the things of earth."

Ver. 18. **Having the understanding darkened.**—Remembering our Lord's saying about the single eye and the fully illuminated body we might say, "If the understanding—by which all light should come—be darkened, 'how great is that darkness'!" **Because of the blindness.**—R.V. "hardness." The word describes the hard skin formed by constant rubbing, as the horny hand of a blacksmith.

Ver. 19. **Who being past feeling.**—Having lost the "ache" which should always attend a violation of law. An ancient commentator uses the now familiar word "anæsthetes" to explain the phrase. **Have given themselves over.**—"Given" represents a word which often connotes an act of treason—and "themselves" is emphatic—"the most tremendous sacrifice ever laid on the altar of sin" (*Beet*). **To lasciviousness.**—"St. Paul stamps upon it the burning word ἀσέλγεια like a brand on the harlot's brow" (*Findlay*). **To work all uncleanness with greediness.**—R.V. margin, "to make a trade of all uncleanness with covetousness.' Their "sin 's not accidental, but a trade"; and a trade at which they work with a "desire of having more."

Ver. 20. **No not so.**—As differently as possible. The same mode of speech which led St. Paul to say to the Galatians, "Shall I praise you? . . . I praise you not"—*i.e.* "I blame you highly."

Ver. 21. **If so be that ye have heard Him.**—The emphasis is on "Him"—"assuming, that is, that it is He, and no other."

Ver. 22. **That ye put off concerning the former conversation.**—It is no "philosophy of clothes" inculcated here. It is a deliverance from "the body of death," like stripping oneself of his very integument. **Conversation.**—R.V. "manner of life." **Which is corrupt.**—R.V. much more strikingly—"waxeth corrupt." St. Paul's figure elsewhere is appropriate—"like a gangrene eating into the flesh."

Vers. 23, 24. The stripping off being complete, and the innermost core of the man being renewed, the investiture may begin. The "habit" laid aside is never to be resumed, and the new robes, "ever white," are not to be soiled. **Righteousness and true holiness.**—R.V. "Righteousness and holiness of truth." See the "dealing truly" of ver. 15, R.V. margin.

Ver. 25. **Putting away lying.**—Findlay holds to it that "*the lie, the falsehood*, is objective and concrete; not *lying*, or *falsehood* as a subjective act, habit, or quality." **Members one of another.**—Let there be "no schism in the body."

Ver. 26. **Let not the sun go down on your wrath.**—The word for "wrath" is not the usual one. It almost seems as if the compound form had reference to the matter "alongside which" wrath was evoked. If "curfew" could ring out the fires of wrath at sundown, we might welcome the knell. Meyer quotes the Pythagorean custom of making up a quarrel by the parties "shaking hands" before sunset.

Ver. 28. **Let him that stole steal no more.**—Though we have not here the word for "brigand," we may think that the thieving had not always been without violence. **That he may have to give.**—Not the profits of wickedness, but "the good" results of his own labour, and may give it to the needy "with cheerfulness" (Rom. xii. 8), with a "hilarity" beyond that of "those who divide the spoil" (Isa. ix. 3).

Ver. 29. **Let no corrupt communication.**—R.V. "speech." Putrid speech can never come forth from any but a bad person, "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." **But that which is good to the use of edifying.**—The word in season "fitly spoken" has an æsthetic charm (Prov. xxv. 11), but it was more necessary to teach these loquacious Asiatics the utilitarian end of having a human tongue. "It is the mere talk, whether frivolous or pompous—spoken from the pulpit or the easy-chair—the incontinence of tongue, the flux of senseless, graceless, unprofitable utterance that St. Paul desires to arrest" (*Findlay*).

Ver. 30. **Grieve not.**—"Do not make Him sorrow." A strong figure like that which says that God was sorry that He had made man (Gen. vi. 6). **Whereby ye are sealed.**—Cf. i. 13. "In whom ye were sealed" (R.V.)

Ver. 31. **Let all bitterness.**—*I.e.* "of speech." "Sarcasm I now see to be, in general, the language of the devil," said one liberally endowed with it. The satirist Hipponax—a native of Ephesus—was called "the bitter." Such a man as "speaks poniards," and whose "every word stabs," may be brilliant and a formidable opponent; he will never be loved. **Wrath and anger.**—The former is the *fuming* anger, "the intoxication of the soul," as St. Basil calls it; the latter is the state after the paroxysm is over, cherishing hatred and planning revenge. **Clamour and railing.**—"Clamour" is the loud outcry so familiar in an Eastern concourse of

excited people (Acts xxiii. 9), like that hubbub in Ephesus when for two hours the populace yelled, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts xix. 28). "Railing," blasphemy—speech that is calculated to do injury. **Malice.**—"Badness." "This last term is separated from the others as generic and inclusive" (*Beet*).

Ver. 32. **Be ye kind.**—The word is found in Christ's invitation to the weary—"My yoke is easy." It is characteristic of the Father that "He is *kind* to the unthankful." The man who drinks wine that is new and harsh says, "The old is *good*" (mellow). **Tenderhearted.**—Soon touched by the weakness of others. **Forgiving . . . as God . . . forgave you.**—The motive and measure of our forgiveness of injuries is the divine forgiveness shown to "all that debt" of our wrong-doing (Matt. xviii. 32).

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

The Dignity of the Christian Life—

I. **Imposes the obligation to act in harmony with its lofty aims.**—"Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (ver. 1). There is the practical, stimulative influence of a high ideal. The Spirit within us has not only changed our nature and cleansed our spiritual vision, but He has lifted our horizon, formed within us distinct outlines of the Christian ideal after which we are to labour, and furnished us with the moral forces with which we are to attain the beauty and unity of a perfect spiritual character. We who are created in God's image and restored in Christ and made partakers of the divine nature in Him, are bound by the conditions of our creation and redemption to endeavour to be like Him here that we may have the fruition of His glorious Godhead hereafter. The true Christian cannot stoop to any meanness either in thought or action. He is dignified without being proud.

II. **Involves the practice of self-suppression.**—1. *In a just estimate of ourselves.* "With all lowliness and meekness." In endeavouring to balance the value and use of our powers and faculties, and in measuring the degree and volume of our influence, we must observe humility—not a cringing, cowardly spirit which would deter us from the right for fear of doing wrong, but an elevated sense of right with courage to perform it, and with humility to acknowledge and confess when we are in the wrong. It does not mean the craven surrender of our honest convictions and carefully formed judgment. We may efface ourselves, but not the truth within us. An Italian bishop being asked the secret of his habitual humility and patience, replied, "It consists in nothing more than in making good use of my eyes. In whatever state I am, I first of all look up to heaven and remember that my principal business here is to get there. I then look down to earth and call to mind the space I shall shortly occupy in it. I then look abroad into the world and observe what multitudes there are who in all respects have more cause to be unhappy than myself. Thus I learn where true happiness is placed, where all our cares must end, and how very little reason I have to repine or complain."

2. *In a loving forbearance towards each other.*—"With longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (ver. 2). The meek man may be severe with himself, and his constant habit of self-suppression may render him somewhat impatient with the unreasonable outbreaks of temper in others. Meekness must be balanced and moderated with patience, and both virtues exercised in the all-pervading element of love. Love softens every harshness, tones down asperity, and welds together the Christian character in a firm but not too rigid a unity. "Bind thyself to thy brother," said Chrysostom. "Those who are bound together in love bear all burdens lightly. Bind thyself to him and him to thee. Both are in thy power; for whomsoever I will, I may easily make my friend."

III. **Demands an earnest striving after a peaceful spiritual unity.**—"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (ver. 3).

Peace—"a silken cord binding into one the members of the Church; the encompassing element of the unity of the Spirit" (*Beet*). The apostle repeatedly and solemnly inculcates unity and peace on all the Churches, warns them against contentions and divisions, and kindles into righteous indignation against all those insidious and false teachers who, under the pretence of advocating a higher piety, really disturb and rend the Church of Christ. On what an enormous scale are preparations made for war! We should not be less diligent and elaborate in taking every precaution in promoting and maintaining peaee.

Lessons.—1. *True humility is always dignified.* 2. *Personal happiness is not the highest aim of the Christian life.* 3. *The noblest virtues of the Christian character are not attained without earnest endeavour.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1-3. *True Church Life.*—1. The word "walk" is of a very extensive signification. It includes all our inward and outward motions, all our thoughts, words, and actions. It takes in, not only everything we do, but everything we either speak or think. 2. We are called to walk, first, "with all lowliness," to have the mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus; not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think; to be little, and poor, and mean, and vile in our own eyes; to know ourselves as also we are known by Him to whom all hearts are opened; to be deeply sensible of our own unworthiness. Who can be duly sensible how much remains in him of his natural enmity to God, or how far he is still alienated from God by the ignorance that is in him? 3. Yea, suppose God has now thoroughly cleansed our heart, and scattered the last remains of sin; yet how can we be sensible enough of our own helplessness, our utter inability to all good, unless we are every hour, yea, every moment, endued with power from on high? 4. When our inmost soul is thoroughly tinctured therewith, it remains that we "be clothed with humility." The word used by St. Peter seems to imply that we be covered with it as with a surtout; that we be all humility, both within and without; tincturing all we think, speak, and do. Let all our actions spring from this fountain; let all our words breathe this spirit; that all men may know we have been with Jesus, and have learned of Him to be lowly in heart. 5. And being taught of Him who teacheth as never man taught, to be meek as well as lowly in heart. This implies not only a power over anger, but over all violent, turbulent passions. It implies the having all our passions in due proportion; none of them either too strong or too weak, but all duly balanced with each other, all subordinate to reason, and reason directed by the Spirit of God. 6. Walk with all "longsuffering." This is nearly related to meekness, but implies something more. It carries on the victory already gained over all your turbulent passions, notwithstanding all the powers of darkness, all the assaults of evil men or evil spirits. It is patiently triumphant over all opposition, and unmoved though all the waves and storms thereof go over you. 7. The "forbearing one another in love" seems to mean, not only the not resenting anything, and the not avenging yourselves; not only the not injuring, hurting, or grieving each other, either by word or deed, but also the bearing one another's burdens, yea, and lessening them by every means in our power. It implies the sympathising with them in their sorrows, afflictions, and infirmities; the bearing them up when, without our help, they would be liable to sink under their burdens. 8. Lastly, the true members of the Church of Christ "endeavour," with all possible diligence, with all care and pains, with

unwearied patience, to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," to preserve inviolate the same spirit of lowliness and meekness, of longsuffering, mutual forbearance, and love; and all these cemented and knit together by that sacred tie—the peace of God filling the heart. Thus only can we be and continue living members of that Church which is the body of Christ. 9. Does it not clearly appear from this whole account why, in the ancient creed commonly called the Apostles', we term it the universal or catholic Church, "the holy catholic Church"? The Church is called holy, because it is holy, because every member thereof is holy, though in different degrees, as He that called them is holy. How clear this is! If the Church, as to the very essence of it, is a body of believers, no man that is not a Christian believer can be a member of it. If this whole body be animated by one Spirit, and endued with one faith, and one hope of their calling, then he who has not that Spirit and faith and hope is no member of this body. It follows, that not only no common swearer, no Sabbath-breaker, no drunkard, no whoremonger, no thief, no liar, none that lives in any outward sin, but none that is under the power of anger or pride, no lover of the world—in a word, none that is dead to God—can be a member of His Church.—*Wesley.*

Brotherly Love in Action.

I. **Walk in lowliness.**—Humble thoughts of ourselves, of our own knowledge, goodness, and importance are necessary to Christian peace and union. We shall not despise our brethren for their want of the internal gifts or external advantages we enjoy. We shall not lean to our own understanding; but, conscious of our liability to err, we shall be attentive to instruction and reproof, open to conviction, ready to retract our errors and confess our faults.

II. **Walk in meekness**—in a prudent restraint and government of the passions. We shall not be easily provoked, our resentments will not be sudden, without cause or without bounds. If a variance happens, we shall stand ready to be reconciled. We shall be cautious not to give, and slow to take offence. In matters of religion our zeal will be tempered with charity.

III. **To our meekness we must add longsuffering and forbearance.**—These terms express the patient and exalted exercise of meekness rather than virtues distinct from it. We are not only to be meek, but longsuffering in our meekness; not only to restrain anger under ordinary offences, but to suppress malice and forbear revenge under the most provoking injuries.

IV. **We must endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**—Not unity of opinion—this is not possible, nor reasonable to be expected, in the present state of mankind; but unity of spirit, of heart and affection, disposing us to preserve the bond of peace and maintain all the duties of Christian fellowship, whatever differences of sentiment take place. To the same purpose are the apostle's exhortations to all the Churches, and especially to those in which diversity of opinion concerning ceremonial usages threatened their external peace.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 3. *Peace the Bond of Unity.*

I. **There is a union of the visible Church and the members thereof among themselves, and this is twofold:** the one necessary to the being of a Church and being of a Church member, so that a Church cannot be a Church nor a man a member without it, the tie of which is God's covenant with the visible Church, and the Church's laying hold of it; the other necessary to the well-being of the Church, which is entertained by unity in judgment, in heart and affection, by concurrences in purposes and actings.

II. **Neither fair pretences for peace and union in the Church, not seconded but contradicted by practice, nor yet careless endeavours easily broken by**

difficulties, will God accept as the duty required for preserving or restoring unity.—There is no less called for than the utmost of our serious endeavours for that end, so that we not only eschew what may give cause of rending, but also be not easily provoked when it is given by others, and when a rent is made spare no pains for having it removed, and weary not under small appearances of success.

III. **Whatever differences may fall out among the members of the Church they are not to break the bond of peaceable walking** one with another by factious sidings, but ought to study unanimous and joint practice in those things wherein there is agreement; and where this peaceable deportment is, it tends to preserve what remains of spiritual unity and to regain what is already lost.—*Fergusson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 4—6.

The Sevenfold Unity of the Church reflected in the Trinity of Divine Persons.

I. **One Spirit** (ver. 4), the animating Principle of the **one body** (ver. 4)—the Church; the Source of its life and ever-watchful Guardian of the Church's unity; the Inspirer of the **one hope**, "Even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (ver. 4). Where the Spirit of Christ dwells as a vitalising, formative principle, He finds or makes for Himself a body. Let no man say, "I have the spirit of religion, I can dispense with forms, I need no fellowship with men, I prefer to walk with God." God will not walk with men who do not care to walk with His people. The oneness of communion amongst the people of Christ is governed by a unity of aim. The old pagan world fell to pieces because it was without hope; its golden age was in the past. No society can endure that lives upon its memories, or that contents itself with cherishing its privileges. Nothing holds men together like work and hope. Christianity holds out a splendid crown of life. It promises our complete restoration to the image of God, the redemption of the body with the spirit from death, and our entrance upon an eternal fellowship with Christ in heaven. The Christian hope supplies to men more truly and constantly than Nature in her most exalted forms

> "The anchor of their purest thoughts, the nurse,
> The guide, the guardian of their heart, and soul
> Of all their moral being."

The hope of our calling is a hope for mankind, nay, for the entire universe. We labour for the regeneration of humanity. We look for the actual ingathering into one in Christ of all things in all worlds, as they are already gathered in God's eternal plan. If it were merely a personal salvation that we had to seek, Christian communion might appear to be an optional thing and the Church no more than a society for mutual spiritual benefit. But seen in this larger light, Church membership is of the essence of our calling (*Findlay*).

II. **One Lord** (ver. 5), or Master, whom we are called to serve. A consentaneous and harmonious obedience to His mandates blends His servants into one compact unity. **One faith** (ver. 5), one body of inviolable truth, one code of divine commands, one gospel of promise, presenting one object of faith. **One baptism** (ver. 5), one gateway of entrance into the company of believers forming the one Church, one initiatory right common to all. Christians may differ as to the mode of baptism and the age at which it should be administered, but all agree it is an institution of Christ, a sign of spiritual renewal, and a pledge of the righteousness that comes by faith. Wherever the sacraments are duly observed, there the supremacy of Christ's rule is recognised, and this rule is the basis on which future unity must be built.

III. **One God**, the supreme and final unity, who is "the Father of all,"

who is above all, and through all, and in you all (ver. 6). *Above all*—He reigns supreme over all His people (Rom. ix. 5). *Through all*—informing, inspiring, stimulating, and using them as instruments to work out His purposes (Rom. xi. 36). *In all*—dwelling in and filling their hearts and the ever-widening circle of their experience. "The absolute sovereignty of the divine Mind over the universe," said Channing, "is the only foundation of hope for the triumph of the human mind over matter, over physical influences, over imperfection and death." With what a grand simplicity the Christian conception of the one God and Father rose above the vulgar pantheon, the swarm of motley deities—some gay and wanton, some dark and cruel, some of supposed beneficence, all infected with human passion and baseness—which filled the imagination of the Græco-Asiatic pagans. What rest there was for the mind, what peace and freedom for the spirit, in turning from such deities to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! This was the very God whom the logic of Greek thought and the practical instincts of Roman law and empire blindly sought. Through ages He had revealed Himself to the people of Israel, who were now dispersed amongst the nations to bear His light. At last He declared His full name and purpose to the world in Jesus Christ. So the gods many and lords many have had their day. By His manifestation the idols are utterly abolished. The proclamation of one God and Father signifies the gathering of men into one family of God. The one religion supplies the basis for one life in all the world. God is *over all*, gathering all worlds and beings under the shadow of His beneficent dominion. He is *through all* and *in all*; an omnipresence of love, righteousness, and wisdom, actuating the powers of nature and of grace, inhabiting the Church and the heart of men (*Findlay*).

Lessons.—1. *In the moral as in the material world there is diversity in unity and unity in diversity.* 2. *All phases of good find their consummation in an imperishable unity.* 3. *To disturb the balance of unity is a great evil.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 4-6. *The Unity of the Church.*

I. **There is one body.**—The Church is a body of which Christ is the Head, and believers are the members. Though Christians are formed into distinct societies, they constitute but one body. They are united to the Head by faith and to their fellow-members by love.

II. **There is one Spirit.**—As all members of the natural body are animated by one soul, so all the members of Christ's body are sanctified, strengthened, and led by the same Spirit. Since there is one Spirit which dwells in all Christians, all contention, bitterness, and envy, all animosity, division, and separation in the Church are offences against the Holy Spirit.

III. **There is one hope of our calling.**—We are all called by the same word, our hope is grounded on the same promises, the object of our hope is the same immortal life.

IV. **There is one Lord.**—Christ is Lord of all by the same right. He has bought us with a high price, redeemed us by His own blood. There is no respect of persons with him. We are called to the same service, are under the same laws, and must appear at the same judgment.

V. **There is one faith.**—The same gospel is the rule of our faith, and this all Christians profess to receive. The faith of all true Christians is essentially the same. The object of it is the word of God, the nature of it is receiving the love of the truth, the effect of it is to purify the heart.

VI. **There is one baptism.**—We are all baptised in the name of Christ, and He is not divided. May differ as to the age at which persons become the subjects of baptism and the manner of administration, but regarding the design of it we are one. Baptism intended

not to divide, but unite the whole Christian world.

VII. **There is one God and Father.**—The Father of the whole creation, but in a more eminent sense the Father of Christians. He is above all. He reigns supreme. He is through all. His essence pervades our frame, His eyes search and try our souls, His influence preserves our spirits. He is in all. In all true Christians by His Spirit. They are the temple of God, and His Spirit dwelleth in them.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 4. *The Oneness of the Church.*—1. All the members of the Church being one body is a strong argument enforcing the duty of keeping peace and unity; it being no less absurd for Christians to bite and devour one another than if the members of the selfsame natural body should tear and destroy one another. 2. As those in nature are in a hopeless state, having no right to heaven and happiness, so the gospel doth open to the person called a large door of well-grounded hope, that, whatever be his misery here, he shall be perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God for ever hereafter. 3. The joint aiming of the saints at one mark should make them of one mind and heart, seeing there is that in glory which will suffice all. Their seeking of one thing need be no occasion of strife and emulation, but rather of unity, for why should they strive together who not only are brethren but also heirs together of the grace of life and shall one day reign together in glory?—*Fergusson.*

One Body and One Spirit.

I. **The unity or oneness of the Church as set forth by the unity or oneness of the body.**—One life animates the whole. The parts mutually subserve one another, while the head thinks and the heart beats for all. There is a certain harmony existing between all the members; they constitute a symmetry among themselves, so that one could not be taken away without destroying the perfection of all the others, more or less marring the grace and beauty of the whole frame. So the Church is one—one mystical body—having one author, God; one Head, which is Christ; and one informing Spirit, the Holy Ghost; one country towards which all its members are travelling, heaven; one code of instructions to guide them thither, the word of God; one and the same band of enemies seeking to bar their passage, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Despite all miserable divisions, wherever there is a man with true love to God and man, any true affiance on Christ, any true obedience to the Spirit and His leadings, *there* exists a member of this mystical body.

II. **As in the human body there is unity, so there is also variety, diversity, multiplicity.**—This is true of the Church of Christ. Its different members have different functions and offices, and in performing these the Church makes equable and harmonious growth.

Lessons.—1. *As members of the same body, let us not separate from brethren in Christ.* 2. *If we are members one of another, many are the debts as such we owe the one to the other.* (1) We owe one another *truth.* (2) *Love* one to another. (3) *Honour* one to another.—*R. C. Trench.*

Ver. 5. *One Lord.*

I. **Christ is our Lord according to every notion and acceptation of the word "Lord."**—He is our Prince and Governor, we are His subjects and vassals; He is our Master, and we are His servants; He is our Owner, or the Possessor and Proprietary of us; He is our Preceptor or Teacher; that is, the Lord of our understanding, which is subject to the belief of His dictates; and the Lord of our practice, which is to be directed by His precepts. He is therefore also our Captain and Leader, whose orders we must observe, whose conduct we should follow, whose pattern we are to regard and imitate in all things.

II. **Christ is also our Lord according to every capacity or respect of nature**

or office that we can consider appertaining to Him.—1. He is our Lord as by nature the Son of God, partaking of the divine essence and perfection. 2. He is our Lord as man, by the voluntary appointment and free donation of God His Father; in regard to the excellency of His Person, and to the merit of His performances. 3. He also, considered as God and man united in one Person, is plainly our Lord. 4. If we are to consider Him as Jesus, our Saviour, that notion doth involve acts of dominion, and thence resulteth a title thereto. Nothing more becomes a Lord than to protect and save; none better deserves the right and the name of a Lord than a Saviour. 5. Likewise, if He be considered as the Christ, that especially implieth Him anointed and consecrated to sovereign dominion, as King of the Church.

III. **Survey the several grounds upon which dominion may be built,** and we shall see that upon all accounts He is our Lord.—1. An uncontrollable power and ability to govern is one certain ground of dominion. 2. To make, to preserve, to provide and dispense maintenance, are also clear grounds of dominion. 3. He hath acquired us by free donation from God His Father. 4. He hath acquired us by just right of conquest, having subdued those enemies unto whom (partly by their fraud and violence, partly from our own will and consent) we did live enslaved and addicted. 5. He hath also further acquired us to Himself by purchase, having by a great price bought us, ransomed us out of sad captivity, and redeemed us from grievous punishment due to us. 6. He likewise acquired a lordship over us by desert, and as a reward from God, suitable to His performances of obedience and patience, highly satisfactory and acceptable to God. 7. He hath acquired a good right and title to dominion over us as our continual most munificent benefactor. 8. Our Saviour Jesus is not only our Lord by nature and by acquisition in so many ways (by various performances, deserts, and obligations put on us), but He is also so by our own deeds, by most free and voluntary, most formal and solemn, and therefore most obligatory acts of ours. (1) If we are truly persuaded that Christ is our Lord and Master, we must then see ourselves obliged humbly to submit unto and carefully to observe His will, to attend unto and to obey His law, with all readiness and diligence. (2) If Christ be our Lord, then are we not our own lords or our own men; we are not at liberty, or at our own disposal, as to our own persons or our actions. (3) If Christ be our Lord (absolutely and entirely such), then can we have no other lords whatever in opposition to Him, or in competition with Him, or otherwise any way than in subordination and subserviency to Him. (4) If Christ be our Lord, we are thereby disobliged, yea, we are indeed prohibited, from pleasing or humouring men, so as to obey any command, to comply with any desire, or to follow any custom of theirs, which is repugnant to the will or precept of Christ. (5) Finally, for our satisfaction and encouragement, we may consider that the service of Christ is rather indeed a great freedom than a service.—*Barrow.*

Ver. 6. *God the Father.*

I. **God is the universal Father.**—1. God is the Father of all things, or of us as creatures, as the efficient Cause and Creator of them all. 2. The Father of intellectual beings. He is styled the Father of spirits; the angels, in way of excellency, are called the sons of God. 3. The Father in a more especial manner of mankind. 4. The Father of all good men, such a relation being built upon higher grounds; for as good they have another original from Him, virtue springs in their hearts from a heavenly seed, that emendation and perfection of nature is produced by His grace enlightening and quickening them; they are images of Him, resembling Him in judgment and disposition of mind, in will and purpose, in action and

behaviour, which resemblances argue them to be sons of God and constitute them such.

II. **The uses of this truth.**—1. It may teach us what reverence, honour, and observance are due from us to God, in equity and justice, according to ingenuity and gratitude. 2. This consideration may instruct and admonish us what we should be and how we should behave ourselves, for if we be God's children it becometh us, and we are obliged in our disposition and demeanour to resemble, to imitate Him. It is natural and proper for children to resemble their parents in their complexion and countenance, to imitate them in their actions and carriage. 3. This consideration may raise us to a just regard, esteem, and valuation of ourselves; may inspire noble thoughts and breed generous inclinations in us; may withdraw us from mean, base, and unworthy designs or practices; may excite and encourage us to handsome, brave, worthy resolutions and undertakings suitable to the dignity of our nature, the nobleness of our descent, the eminence of so high a relation, of so near an alliance to God. 4. This consideration is a motive to humility, apt to depress vain conceit and confidence in ourselves. If we are God's children, so as to have received our beings, all our powers and abilities, all our goods and wealth, both internal and external, both natural and spiritual, from His free disposal, so as be continually preserved and maintained by His providence to depend for all our subsistence upon His care and bounty, what reason can we have to assume or ascribe anything to ourselves? 5. This consideration shows us the reason we have to submit entirely to the providence of God with contentedness and acquiescence in every condition. 6. Obligeth us to be patient and cheerful in the sorest afflictions, as deeming them to come from a paternal hand, inflicted with great affection and compassion, designed for and tending to our good. 7. Shows the reason we have to obey those precepts which enjoin us to rely on God's providence. 8. Serves to breed and cherish our faith, to raise our hope, to quicken our devotion. For whom shall we confide in if not in such a Father? From whom can we expect good if not from Him? To whom can we have recourse so freely and cheerfully on any occasion if not to Him? 9. Considering this point will direct and prompt us how to behave ourselves towards all God's creatures according to their respective natures and capacities. If God be the Father of all things, they are all thence in some sort our brethren, and so may claim from us a fraternal affection and demeanour answerable thereto.—*Barrow.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7—12.

The Gifts of Christ to His Church—

I. **That each member of the Church possesses some gift from Christ.**—"Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (ver. 7). All are not alike talented, but each one has some gift of grace. Every gift is not from earth, but from heaven; not from man, but from Christ. Look not down, then, as swine to the acorns they find lying there, and never once up to the tree they come from. Look up; the very frame of our body bears that way. It is nature's check to the body. "Graces are what a man *is*; but enumerate his gifts and you will know what he *has*. He *is* loving, he *has* eloquence, or medical skill, or legal knowledge, or the gift of acquiring languages, or that of healing. You have only to cut out his tongue, or to impair his memory, and the gift is gone. But you must destroy his very being, change him into another man, obliterate his identity, before he ceases to be a loving man. Therefore you may contemplate the gift separate from the man; you may admire it and despise

him. But you cannot contemplate the grace separate from the man" (*F. W. Robertson*).

> "If facts allure thee, think how BACON shined,
> The wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind."
> *Pope.*

The humblest member of the Church of Christ is not without his gift. The grace of the gospel elevates and sanctifies all his powers and opportunities, and turns them into noblest uses.

II. **That the gifts of Christ to His Church are distributed with the lavish generosity of a conqueror returning from the field of victory** (vers. 8-10).—We have read of the profuse gifts of victorious warriors:—of Gonsalvo, the great Spanish captain, whose unselfish prodigality was proverbial. "Never stint your hand," he was accustomed to say; "there is no way of enjoying one's property like giving it away";—of Alexander the Great, who on one occasion gave a blank draft to one of his generals with liberty to fill in any amount he chose. When the treasurer, surprised at the enormous sum inserted, asked his imperial master if there was not some mistake, he answered: "No; pay it, pay it: the man honours me by assuming the inexhaustible resources of my empire";—of Belisarius, whose victories were always followed by liberal and extravagant largesses. "By the union of liberality and justice," writes Gibbon, "he acquired the love of his soldiers, without alienating the affections of the people. The sick and wounded were relieved with medicines and money, and still more efficaciously by the healing visits and smiles of their commander. The loss of a weapon or a horse was instantly repaired, and each deed of valour was rewarded by the rich and honourable gifts of a bracelet or a collar, which were rendered more precious by the judgment of Belisarius. He was endeared to the husbandmen by the peace and plenty which they enjoyed under the shadow of his standard. Instead of being injured, the country was enriched by the march of the Roman armies; and such was the rigid discipline of their camp that not an apple was gathered from the tree, not a path could be traced in the fields of corn. Victory by sea and land attended his arms. He subdued Africa, Italy, and the adjacent islands, led away captives the successors of Genseric and Theodoric, filled Constantinople with the spoils of their palaces, and in the space of six years recovered half the provinces of the Western empire";—and of Aurelian, whose triumphant entry into Rome after his victories in the East was the longest, most brilliant, and imposing of any recorded in the annals of the empire, and was signalised by rich donations to the army and the people; the Capitol and every other temple glittered with the offerings of his ostentatious piety, and the temple of the sun alone received above fifteen thousand pounds of gold. But who can measure the munificence of the ascended Saviour, the divine Conqueror, who, as the fruit of His unparalleled victory, has scattered His gifts among men, to enrich them for ever? He gives not grudgingly and sparingly, but after the measure of His own great nature. He gives not for display but for blessing, and His smallest gift out-values the most lavish donation of the richest earthly benefactor.

III. **That the gifts of Christ qualify men for special work in His Church** (ver. 11).—The "apostles, prophets, evangelists" linked Church to Church and served the entire body; the "pastors and teachers" had charge of local and congregational affairs. The apostles, with the prophets, were the founders of the Church. Their distinctive functions ceased when the foundation was laid and the deposit of revealed truth was complete. The evangelistic and pastoral callings remain; and out of them have sprung all the variety of Christian ministries since exercised. Evangelists, with apostles or missionaries, bring new souls to Christ and carry His message into new lands. Pastors and teachers follow in their train, tending the ingathered sheep, and labouring

to make each flock that they shepherd, and every single man, perfect in Christ Jesus.

IV. **That the gifts of Christ furnish the full moral equipment of the members of His Church** (ver. 12).—Christ's gifts of great and good men in every age have been bestowed for a thoroughly practical purpose—"the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, the edifying of the body of Christ." No one man has all the gifts requisite for the full development of the Church; but it is the privilege and honour of each worker to use his special gift for the general good. The combination of gifts, faithfully and diligently employed, effects the desired end. The Church must be built up, and this can be done only by the harmonious use of the gifts of Christ, not by mere human expedients. "We may have eloquent preaching, crowded churches, magnificent music, and all the superficial appearance of a great religious movement, whilst the vaunted revival is only a poor galvanised thing, a corpse twitching with a strange mimicry of life, but possessed of none of its vital energy and power." Gifts are dangerous without the grace and wisdom to use them. Many a brilliant genius has gone down into oblivion by the reckless abuse of his gifts. Christ endows His people with gifts that they may use them for the increase and upbuilding of His Church, and they must be exercised in harmony with the rules and purpose of the divine Architect. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it."

Lessons.—1. *Christ's estimate of His Church is seen in the spiritual riches He has lavished upon it.* 2. *The gifts of each member of the Church are for the benefit of all.* 3. *The gifts of Christ to His Church are the offerings of a boundless love.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 7. *The Gospel according to Mark.*—The writers of the four gospels completed their work not for the sake of making a literary reputation for themselves, or of adding to the literary masterpieces of the world, but for the spiritual benefit of the Christian Church. Christ our Lord sitting in the heavens, seeing exactly what was wanted in the apostolic Churches, and in the Church of all time, seeing what was wanted in the evangelists themselves if they were to supply the Church's wants, measured out His gifts to the evangelists. Accordingly, to each evangelist He gave that special gift which was needed in order to do his particular work. What was the grace that was given to St. Mark? It has been said that St. Mark's gospel has no special character, that it is the least original of the four, that it is insipid, that it might have been dispensed with without loss to the harmony of the evangelical narrative. Even St. Augustine has spoken of it as an epitome of St. Matthew; and his deservedly great authority has obtained a currency of this opinion in the Western Church. But in point of fact, although St. Mark has more in common with St. Matthew than with any other evangelist, he is far from being a mere epitomist of the first gospel. He narrates at least three independent incidents which St. Matthew does not notice. He has characteristics which are altogether his own.

I. **St. Mark is remarkable for his great attention to subordinate details.**—He supplies many particulars which evangelists who write more at length altogether omit. From him, for instance, we learn the name of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, and of Bartimæus, the blind man healed by our Lord. From him we learn how Simon of Cyrene was related to well-known Christians of the next generation—Alexander and Rufus. He it is who tells us that the woman of Canaan whose petition our Lord so indulgently received was a Syrophenician, and that our Lord was popularly spoken of as the carpenter. He is careful to point

out more minutely than do others the scenes in which our Lord took part on four occasions. He describes particularly our Lord's look. He notes the express affections of our Lord's human soul, His love for the rich young man, His anger with the Pharisee, His pity for the leper, His groaning in spirit on two separate occasions. And here we have something more than a literary peculiarity—than a style of writing which corresponds to those pre-Raphaelite artists who render every leaf and every blade of grass with scrupulous accuracy. I say that we are here face to face with a moral and spiritual excellence which forms part of the special grace given to St. Mark. Close attention to details in any workman means a recognition of the sacredness of fact. Where details are lost sight of, or blurred over, in the attempt to produce a large, general, indistinct effect, there is always a risk of indifference to the realities of truth. The very least fact is sacred, whatever be its relative importance to other facts. But in a life like that of our Lord, everything is necessarily glowing with interest, however trivial it might appear to be in any other connection. This care for details is thus the expression of a great grace—reverence for truth, reverence for every fragment of truth that touched the human life of the Son of God.

II. **St. Mark is remarkable for the absence of a clearly discernible purpose in his gospel**, over and above that of furnishing a narrative of our Lord's conflict with sin and evil during His life as man upon the earth. The three other evangelists have each of them a manifest purpose in writing of this kind. St. Matthew wishes to show to the Jews that our Lord is the Messiah of the Jewish prophecy. St. Luke would teach the Gentile Churches that He is the Redeemer whose saving power may be claimed through faith by the whole race of men. St. John is, throughout, bent upon showing that He speaks and acts while in the flesh as the eternal Word or Son of God, who has been made flesh and was dwelling among us. And it has been said that St. Mark's narrative is an expansion of those words of Peter—that Jesus of Nazareth "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him." Probably this is true; but then these words describe not a purpose beyond the narrative, but the substance of the narrative itself. St. Mark simply records a sacred life as he had learned it from the lips of Peter, not for any purpose beyond the narrative itself; but whatever it might prove beyond itself, it was to a believing Christian unspeakably precious.

III. **A few words in conclusion.**—"Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." As no two human souls exactly resemble each other, so no two souls are endowed in an exactly similar way. And for the difference of endowment let us be sure there is always a reason in the divine Mind, for each soul in every generation has its appointed work to do, without itself as within itself; and it is endowed with exactly the grace, whether of mind or heart, which will best enable it to do that particular work. Some may think that they have received little or nothing —some gift so small as to be scarcely appreciable. The probability is that they have not yet considered what God has done for them. They have spent their time in thinking of what He has withheld, instead of thinking of what He has given; of what they might have been, instead of what they are. Certainly the grace which our Lord gave to St. Paul when he wrote his great epistle to the Romans was immensely greater than that which He gave to Tertius, the poor amanuensis, who took it down from the apostle's dictation, and who inserts a greeting from himself just at the end of the document. And yet Tertius, too, had his part in the work—a humble but a very real part, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. He did not say, "Because I am not the eye I am not of

the body." He made the most of the grace which was certainly his. And others may think, rightly or wrongly, that unto them very great graces have been given according to the gift of Christ, that they are the hands or the eyes of the holy body, the men who do its work, or the men who discern the truths which support its life. Well, if it be so, this is a reason, not for confident satisfaction, but for anxiety. Such gifts as these are edge tools; they may easily prove the ruin of their possessors. For all such gifts an account must one day most assuredly be rendered; and if self has appropriated that which belongs to God or to His Church, it cannot but entail misery on the possessor. If a man has wealth, or ability, or station; much more if he has cultivated intelligence and generous impulses; most of all if his heart has been fired by the love of God, and the unseen is to him a serious reality, and he has hopes and motives which really transcend the frontiers of the world of sense, then, assuredly, his safety lies in remembering that he is a trustee who will one day have to present his account at the great audit, when the eminence of his gifts will be the exact measure of his responsibility. Eighteen centuries have passed since St. Mark went to reign somewhere beneath his Master's throne whose life he had described; but he has left us the result of his choicest gift—he has left us his gospel. What has it—what have the three gospels—hitherto done for each of us? It is recorded that John Butler, an excellent Church of England layman of the last generation, stated on his death-bed that on looking back on his life the one thing he most regretted was that he had not given more time to the careful study of the life of our Lord in the four evangelists. Probably he has not been alone in that regret; and if the truth were told, many of us would have to confess that we spend much more thought and time upon the daily papers, which describe the follies and errors of the world, than on the records of that life which was given for the world's redemption. The festival of an evangelist ought to suggest a practical resolution that, so far as we are concerned, the grace which he received, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, shall not, please God, be lost. Ten minutes a day seriously spent on our knees, with the gospel in our hands, will do more to quicken faith, love, reverence, spiritual and moral insight and power, than we can easily think.—*H. P. Liddon.*

Vers. 9, 10. *The contrasted Humiliation and Exaltation of Christ.*

I. **The circumstances of the Saviour's depression from His original state.**—We say that a person stoops, that he bends, that he sinks. Moral correspondencies to these actions are understood. They are condescensions. Immanuel is the name of our Saviour when born into our world and dwelling in it—God with us. A local residence is thus described. And we are informed of the degree which marks His coming down from heaven, of the manner in which He came into the world—He descended into the lower parts of the earth. What lowliness is this! Similar terms are employed in other portions of the inspired volume; by collating them with those of the text we shall most satisfactorily determine its sense.

1. *The incarnation of Christ may be thus expressed.*—To what did He not submit? By what was He not buffeted? What insult did not disfigure His brow? What shade did not cloud His countenance? What deep waters did not go over His soul? His was humanity in its severest pressures and humblest forms.

2. *This form of language may denote the death of Christ.*—It is the ordinary phrase of the Old Testament: "They shall go into the lower parts of the earth: Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps." Does it not seem strange that His soul should be commended hence who had often bound death to His bidding and sum-

moned from the grave its prey? He is brought low to the dust of death. The erect figure is prostrated. The instinctive life is arrested. That mysterious frame—related to the infinite and the divine temple of all greatness, shrine of all sanctity—that "Holy Thing" sleeps in death.

3. *This style may be intended to intimate that burial to which He yielded.*—"Lest I become like them that go down into the pit." "So must the Son of man be in the heart of the earth." He has made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death! He is put away into darkness. He is held of death in its gloomy chambers. He is as a victim and a prey. It is a prison-keep.

4. *The separation of the Redeemer's body and spirit may be described in these words.*—We mark in this departure of His soul the simple requirement of death. It could not be retained. It descended into the lower parts of the earth. This is the reverse of resurrection and heavenward flight. It was humiliation. These are the gradations of His descent. These are the "lower parts of the earth" to which He declined. This is His coming forth from the Father! This is His coming down from heaven! This is His coming into the world! His measureless surrender of claims! His inconceivable renunciation of honours! Stooping to inferior and still inferior levels of ignominy! Plunging to deeper and still deeper abysses of shame!

II. **The glory of His subsequent exaltation.**—1. *It is in itself an absolute expression of love.*

2. *It justifies an expectation of surpassing benefits.*

3. *The act regulates and secures its own efficiency.*

4. *This act is to be regarded as of incomparable worth and excellence.*—The mission of Christ contemplated the highest principles which can direct the divine conduct. He came to vindicate that character which to conceive aright is the happiness of all creatures—to uphold and avenge that law which cannot be infringed without an utter loss of good and overthrow of order—to atone for sin whose slight and impunity would have been the allowance of infinite mischiefs and evils—to bring in an everlasting righteousness adequate to the justification of the most guilty, and of the most multiplied objects who needed it—leaving it for ever proved that no rule nor sanction of God's moral government can be violated without a necessary and meet resentment! His ascension was a radiant triumph. Scarcely is it more described than His resurrection. We catch but a few notes of the resounding acclaim, we mark but a few fleeces of the glory-cloud, we recognise but a few attendants of the angel-train. With that laconic force which characterises holy writ, it is simply recorded, "Who is gone into heaven."

III. **The reciprocal influence of these respective facts.**—"The same" was He who bowed Himself to these indignities and who seized these rewards. And this identity is of the greatest value. Not only do we hail Him in His reinstatement in original dignities, but in the augmentation of His glories. Deity was never so beheld before. There is a combination and a form of the divine perfections entirely new. We repine that He is not here. We forget that it is expedient that He should go away. Heaven alone provides scope for His undertakings and channel for His influences. There must He abide until the restitution of all things. But nothing of His sympathy or His grace do we forego.—*R. W. Hamilton.*

Vers. 9, 10. *The Ascension and its Results.*

I. **With respect to the new heavens and the new earth, what may we not infer from the ascension of Christ in full integrity of His nature above all heavens with respect to the conversion and transformation and ennobling of this material?**—The nature and history of His person revealed the relations clearly between heaven and

earth, between God and man, between the material and the spiritual. We cannot for a moment look upon the transformation and exaltation of Christ's nature as an isolated fact dissociated from the restitution and exaltation of all things spoken of in His word. The nature with which He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven was the same nature in which He was crucified, though glorified and swallowed up of life. Must we not say, then, that the body which ascended in relation to the body which was crucified and laid in the grave may illustrate the relation of the present heavens and the new earth? And, in accordance with this idea, are there not every way most wonderful changes and transformations of which the ascension of Christ's body seems to be the fulfilment and crown and also the firstfruits? The flower from its imprisoned bud, the insect from its grovelling form, light out of darkness, electricity from ponderable elements, the strange affinities of matter striving to break forth from their captivity, the unerring instincts of animal life held, as it were, in bondage—all seem to point with prophetic finger to a future deliverance and ennobled state and condition whilst meekly waiting, but with earnest expectation, with the whole creation for the deliverance and glorious liberty of the sons of God. The gospel therefore contains a gospel for nature as well as for man—the prediction of the day when the strife of elements shall cease, when the powers of darkness shall be swallowed up of life, when the lion shall lie down with the lamb, when the tares shall no longer grow with the wheat, when creation, now so weary, shall lift up her head and rejoice in the redemption for which she now groans and travails.

II. **If we cannot dissociate the history of Jesus from the history of the earth, much less can it be dissociated from the history of mankind.**—He is humanity, root and crown. Humanity exists nowhere else but in Him. No aggregate of men make humanity, nor can personality be ascribed to humanity except in Him. Individual men may have a personality, but humanity is only an idea except it exists in Him who is its root and crown; and it is in this sense that He is spoken of, and that He speaks of Himself as, the Son of man. In His ascension, therefore, which carries as a necessary presupposition all the facts of His history, mankind is delivered from its curse and from bondage. Identity of nature and reciprocity of choice now constitute the most intimate union and most blessed fellowship of which we are conscious, and it is the fair offshoot, the true type of that which is to be the highest, to which He is exalted above all heavens, from which height He has promised to gather together our common humanity. In such and for such a relation He is exalted to the throne of universal dominion as the Bridegroom of mankind, to be the Head over all things to His Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him which filleth all in all.

III. **What may we not learn from the fact of Christ's ascension**—not merely with respect to the new heavens and the new earth, not merely with respect to mankind and its history, but with respect to the government and providence of earth? If all nature is gathered up and represented in human nature, and if all human nature is gathered up and represented in the Son of man, and if the Son of man resteth and sitteth upon the throne of universal dominion, then, my brethren, the conclusion is as direct as it is clear, that all things must be working together in the interests of His kingdom and of His Church, that all things have but one purpose and one end to which the whole creation moves. We may say with Herbert:

"For us the winds do blow,
The earth does rest, heavens move, and fountains flow;
Nothing we see but means our good—
'Tis our delight or has our treasure.
The whole is either cupboard of our food
Or cabinet of pleasure."

These lines contain as deep a philosophy

as they do good poetry. "All things unto our flesh are kind in their descent and being." As they descend to us they bless our lower nature, but as we follow them in their ascent they bless our minds. And in history are there not changes similar to and commensurate with those which we have seen in nature, and all subordinated to one end? Mighty nations and kingdoms have arisen and passed away, and passed away, we might add, in the greatness of their might. What strange development, as it has well been asked, is it that the power of the world should rise to a great height of glory, and, not able to sustain it, pass away? Because they knew not God—because they were prejudicial to the interests of man. The present state and prospects of the world are but the results of all its past history, of the action and reaction, the strife and ceaseless conflict, which have been going on from the first—the strife and ceaseless conflict between the spirit of man's revolt in all the forms of will-worship and idolatrous power, and the returning spirit of allegiance towards God and His kingdom of life and love. On the one hand, therefore, we have a series of rapid and mighty developments of the very power which destroyed them when at the very height of their glory; on the other hand, we have the continuous and silent growth and expansion of the same ideas—all-conquering ideas and all-conquering beliefs personally embodied from the first in men confessing their allegiance to God.—*Dr. Pulsford.*

Ver. 10. *The Humiliation and Exaltation of Christ.*

I. **Christ's humiliation.**—Implied in the words, "He that descended." These words bear the same sense with those in Ps. cxxxix. 15, and may be properly taken for Christ's incarnation and conception in the womb of the Virgin—1. Because other expositions may be shown to be unnatural, forced, or impertinent, and there is no other besides this assignable. 2. Since Paul here uses David's words it is most probable he used them in David's sense. 3. The words descending and ascending are so put together in the text that they seem to intend a summary of Christ's whole transaction in man's redemption, begun in His conception and consummated in His ascension.

II. **Christ's glorious advancement and exaltation.**—"He ascended far above all heavens" to the most eminent place of dignity and glory in the highest heaven.

III. **The qualification and state of Christ's person in reference to both conditions.**—He was the same, showing the unity of the two natures in the same person.

IV. **The end of Christ's ascension.**—"That He might fill all things." *All things* may refer—1. To the Scripture prophecies and predictions. 2. To the Church as He might fill that with His gifts and graces. 3. To all things in the world. This latter interpretation preferred. He may be said to fill all things—1. By the omnipresence of His nature and universal diffusion of His Godhead. 2. By the universal rule and government of all things committed to Him as Mediator upon His ascension.—*South.*

Vers. 11, 12. *The Work of the Ministry.*

I. **It is evident that public teachers in the Church are to be a distinct order of men.**—Christ has given some pastors and teachers. None has a right publicly to teach in the Church but those who are called, sent, authorised to the work in the gospel way. All Christians are to exhort, reprove, and comfort one another as there is occasion; but public teaching in the Church belongs peculiarly to some—to those who are given to be pastors and teachers.

II. **Public teachers are here called Christ's gifts.**—"He *gave* some pastors and teachers." The first apostles were commissioned immediately by Christ. They who were thus commissioned of Heaven to preach the gospel were

authorised to ordain others. Christ gave pastors and teachers, not only to preach His gospel, but to train up and prepare holy men for the same work.

III. **Ministers are to be men endued with gifts suitable to the work to which they are called.**—As in the early days of the gospel public teachers were called to extraordinary services, so they were endued with extraordinary gifts; but these gifts were only for a season. As the business of a minister is to teach men the things which Christ has commanded in the Scriptures, so it is necessary he himself should be fully instructed in them. In the early days, as there were evangelists who went forth to preach the gospel where Christ had not been named, so there were pastors and teachers who had the immediate care of Churches already established.

IV. **The great object of the ministry is the building up of the Church of Christ.**—The ministry is intended for the improvement of saints, as well as for the conversion of sinners. The apostle mentions also the unity of the knowledge of Christ. We must not rest in attainments already made, but continually aspire to the character of a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.—*Lathrop.*

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

True Christian Manhood—

I. **Attained by the unity of an intelligent faith in Christ.**—1. *This faith must be based on knowledge.* "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (ver. 13). A faith, so called, not based on knowledge is fanaticism. True faith is the result of conviction—a profound consciousness of the truth. Many reach this stage. They have heard the evidence, examined it, and are clearly persuaded of its truth; but they never get beyond that. They are like the neap tide that comes rolling in as if it would sweep everything before it; but when it arrives at a certain point, it stops, and with all the ocean at its back it never passes the mark where it is accustomed to pause. It is well to get to the neap-tide mark of conviction; but there is no salvation till the soul is carried by the full spring tide of conviction into a voluntary and complete surrender to Christ. It is weak, it is cowardly, when convinced of the right, not to do it promptly and heartily. Faith acquires its full-rounded unity when it is exercised, not on any abstract truth, but on a person who is the living embodiment of all truth. The final object of faith is "the Son of God," and any truth is valuable only as it helps us to Him. Christ has Himself revealed the truth essential to be believed in order to salvation: He is Himself that truth.

2. *Perfect manhood is a complete Christ-likeness.*—"Unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (ver. 13). Man is so great that he is perpetually striving after a loftier ideal; nothing that has limits can satisfy him. "It is because there is an infinite in Him which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury under the finite. Will the whole finance ministers and upholsterers and confectioners of modern Europe undertake in joint-stock company to make one shoeblack happy? They cannot accomplish it above an hour or two; for the shoeblack also has a soul quite other than his stomach, and would require, if you consider it for his permanent satisfaction and saturation, simply this allotment, no more and no less—God's infinite universe altogether to himself, therein to enjoy infinitely and fill every wish as fast as it arose. Try him with half a universe of an omnipotence, he sets to quarrelling with the proprietor of the other half and declares himself the most maltreated of men" (*Carlyle*). True manhood does not consist in the development of a fine physique, or of a brilliant mentality, or in the pursuit of heroic

ambitions. It lies in the nobleness of the soul at peace with God, seeking in all things to please Him, and to possess and exhibit the mind of Christ. The pagan hero is the warrior, the ruler, the poet, the philosopher; the Christian hero is the Christ-like man. The supreme type of manhood is Christ-likeness. The ideal is conceived by faith, and the actual is attained only by the exercise of the same grace.

II. **Superior to the childish vacillation induced by deceptive teaching** (ver. 14).—The false teachers played with truth, as men play with dice, with the reckless indifference of gamblers, and they and their victims were swayed to and fro, with ruin for the ultimate goal. Like a rudderless ship they were tossed about at the caprice of every current, with the inevitable result of wreckage among the rocks and quicksands. Professing a zeal for truth, they deceived themselves and others by ever changing their point of view, and craftily avoiding the practical bearing of truth in its aims to change the heart and reform the life. The moment the application of truth pressing upon the conscience made them uncomfortable, they tacked about and sailed off under another issue. As the restless seaweed, waving to and fro in the ever-changing tide, can never grow to the dignity of a tree, so those who are swayed by every changing phase of error can never grow up to the strength and stability of true Christian manhood. We can sympathise with the doubts and perplexities of an earnest seeker after truth; but our sympathy changes into impatience when we discover that the seeker is more in search of novelty than truth, of variety rather than certainty. To be for ever in doubt is to be in the fickle stage of mental and moral infancy. It is the worst phase of childishness.

III. **Is a continual growth in the truth and love of Christ** (vers. 15, 16).—It is the high distinction of man that he is susceptible of almost unlimited growth in mental and moral attainments. One of the greatest distances between animalism and man is seen in the unbridged gulf of *progress*. The animal remains where he was, but man has been progressing in every department of life from the very first. There is between them all the breadth of history. The animal builds its nest as it ever did, the ant by the same marvellous instinct constructs its geometrical cells now as at the first; but man is a genius—he creates. His first rude efforts in shaping his dwellings have gone on progressing and improving until we have the architectural development of to-day. In every kind of art it is the same—rude flint knives, lance heads, needles, were his first weapons and implements; to them succeeded bronze, and then iron—each marking stages in that history of progress up to the beautiful cutlery, stores, and arsenals of the present day. The animal roars or chatters to-day as it has done all along. It has made no progress towards intelligent speech—a rubicon the animal will never cross. But man, who began with one speech, and a very limited vocabulary of words, has developed speech into the great languages of ancient and modern literature. A wider gulf than this is hardly conceivable. But the moral growth of man is more remarkable. The era of the gospel is a revelation of the power of love. With the ancients a mere sentiment, Christianity teaches that love is the essence of religion; and that nature is the manliest and noblest that advances in the knowledge of divine truth and in the self-sacrificing love of Christ. The whole fabric of the Christian character is built up in the ever-increasing exercise of Christ-like love.

Lessons.—*Christian manhood is*—1. *Acquired by an intelligent faith in Christ.* 2. *Developed by an imitation of Christ.* 3. *Maintained and strengthened by constant fidelity to Christ.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 13-16. *The Growth of the Church.*

I. **The goal of the Church's life** (ver. 13).—The mark at which the Church is to arrive is set forth in a two-fold way—*in its collective and its individual aspects.* We must all unitedly attain the oneness of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God; and we must attain, each of us, a perfect manhood, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. All our defects are, at the bottom, deficiencies of faith. We fail to apprehend and appropriate the fulness of God in Christ. The goal of the regenerate life is never absolutely won; it is hid with Christ in God. But there is to be a constant approximation to it, both in the individual believer and in the body of Christ's people. And a time is coming when that goal will be practically attained, so far as earthly conditions allow. The Church after long strife will be reunited, after long trial will be perfected. Then this world will have had its use, and will give place to the new heavens and earth.

II. **The malady which arrests its development** (ver. 14).—The childishness of so many Christian believers exposed them to the seductions of error, and ready to be driven this way and that by the evil influences active in the world of thought around them. So long as the Church contains a number of unstable souls, so long she will remain subject to strife and corruption. At every crisis in human thought there emerges some prevailing method of truth, or of error, the resultant of current tendencies, which unites the suffrages of a large body of thinkers, and claims to embody the spirit of the age. Such a method of error our own age has produced as the outcome of the anti-Christian speculation of modern times, in the doctrines current under the names of Positivism, Secularism, or Agnosticism. Modern Agnosticism removes God farther from us, beyond the reach of thought, and leaves us with material nature as the one positive and accessible reality, as the basis of life and law. Faith and knowledge of the Son of God it banishes as dreams of our childhood. This materialistic philosophy gathers to a head the unbelief of the century. It is the living antagonist of divine revelation.

III. **The means and conditions of its growth** (vers. 15, 16).—To the craft of false teachers St. Paul would have his Churches oppose the weapons only of truth and love. Sincere believers, heartily devoted to Christ, will not fall into fatal error. A healthy life instinctively repels disease. Next to the moral condition lies the spiritual condition of advancement—the full recognition of the supremacy and sufficiency of Christ. He is the perfect ideal for each, the common source of life and progress for all. He is the Head of the Church and the heart of the world. Another practical condition of Church growth is organisation—"all the body fitly framed and knit together." A building or a machine is fitted together by the adjustment of its parts. A body needs, besides this mechanical construction, a pervasive life, a sympathetic force, knitting it together. And so it is in love that this body of the Church builds up itself. The perfect Christian and the perfect Church are taking shape at once. Each of them requires the other for its due realisation. The primary condition of Church health and progress is that there shall be an unobstructed flow of the life of grace from point to point through the tissues and substance of the entire frame.—*Findlay.*

Vers. 13-15. *Christian Manhood.*

I. **Christian manhood is a growth.**—1. A growth having its inception in the simple fact of becoming a Christian. This is a decided advance upon the most moral and cultivated state otherwise attainable. It involves the quickening into a new life which is to grow. 2. A growth marking a continual advancement till we all come in

the unity—the respect in which one grows—the union, conjunction of faith and of knowledge. 3. A growth resulting from culture under divinely appointed agencies. The most splendid growth, other things being equal, is the result of the highest culture. The highest culture is possible only through the most rigid conformity to the laws of development and the appliance of the best agencies. 4. A growth the standard of whose completeness is the fulness of Christ. The stature—the adultness, the full-grown manhood of Christ—is the standard of growth, whose attainment is the Christian's noblest zeal.

II. **The elements of Christian manhood.**—1. *Largeness*—in the Christian's views of truth, of man's need, of Christ's work, of schemes and plans for its greater furtherance.

2. *Dignity.*—That deep, inwrought sense of the true worth and greatness of his nature, as a renewed man, and of his position as a child of God and joint-heir with Christ. Christian ethics are the best ethics; highest, purest, noblest, safest. He lives by these naturally who has a well-developed Christian manhood.

3. *Courageousness and strength.*—Courage makes a man put forth his best strength, while strength enables courage to achieve its best deeds.

III. **The outworking of Christian manhood.**—It gives:—

1. *Steadfastness.*—No more children. No more carried about—borne round and round as in the swiftly whirling eddy of the sea—by every wind of doctrine.

2. *Sincerity.*—"Speaking the truth in love" refers both to the sincerity of life and our relation to the truth.

3. *A further growth.*—As the full-grown tree, leaves and blossoms and bears; as fruit, after it is full-grown, mellows, matures, sweetens: ripening as wheat for the garner.—*J. M. Frost.*

Vers. 14-16. *Christian Maturity.*

I. **The negative part of this description.**—1. *Christians must not remain children.*—In humility, meekness, and teachableness, let them be children; but in understanding, constancy, and fortitude they should be men. Children have but little knowledge and a weak judgment. They believe hastily and act implicitly. They are governed by passion more than reason, by feeling more than judgment.

2. *The apostle cautions that we be not tossed to and fro like a ship rolling on the waves.*—The man without principle, knowledge, and judgment is at the mercy of every rude gust. He is driven in any direction, as the wind happens to blow. He makes no port, but is every moment in danger of shipwreck.

3. *We must not be carried about with every wind of doctrine.*—False doctrines, like winds, are blustering and unsteady. They blow from no certain point, but in all directions, and frequently shift their course. The light and chaffy Christian, the hypocritical and unprincipled professor, is easily carried about by divers and strange doctrines. He shifts his course and changes his direction, as the wind of popular opinion happens to drive.

4. *We are in danger from the cunning craftiness of men.*—True ministers use plainness of speech, and by manifestation of the truth commend themselves to the consciences of men. Corrupt teachers use sleight and craft, that they may ensnare the simple, decoy the unsuspecting, and thus make proselytes to their party. They pretend to superior sanctity. They are watchful to take advantage of an unhappy circumstance in a Church. They unsettle men's minds from the established order of the gospel, and prejudice them against the regular maintenance of the ministry, representing all order in Churches as tyranny and all stated provision for the ministry as oppression. They promise men liberty, but are themselves the servants of corruption.

II. **The positive part.** — 1. *The mature Christian must speak the truth in love.* Be sincere in love. We should acquire a good doctrinal know-

ledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. We should be well established in the truth. We should see that our hearts are conformed to the truth. We must walk in the truth.

2. *We must grow up in all things into Christ.*—A partial religion is not that which the gospel teaches. We must have respect to the whole character of Christ, to the whole compass of duty, to every known doctrine and precept of Scripture. All the graces of the gospel unite in forming the Christian's temper. They all operate in harmony. His religion is one continued, uniform, consistent work.

III. **How Christian maturity is attained.**—From the growth of the human body the apostle borrows a similitude to illustrate the spiritual growth of the Christian Church. It is as absurd to expect growth in knowledge and holiness without the means instituted for the edifying of the body of Christ as it would be to expect the growth of a natural body without supplies of food.

Lessons.—1. *There is no Christian growth where love is wanting.* 2. *Christians are bound to seek the peace in order to the edification of the Church.* —*Lathrop.*

Ver. 14. *The Case of Deceivers and Deceived considered.*

I. **Consider the case of deceivers or seducers such as by their sleight and cunning craftiness lie in wait to deceive.**—The particular motives by which men may be led to beguile others are reducible to three—pride, avarice, and voluptuousness: love of honour, or profit, or pleasure. 1. There is often a great deal of pride and vanity in starting old notions and broaching new doctrines. It is pretending to be wiser than the rest of the world, and is thought to be an argument of uncommon sagacity. Upon this footing some are perpetually in quest of new discoveries. Nothing pleases them, if they have not the honour of inventing it or of receiving it in their times. When once a man has thus far given loose to his vanity and thinks himself significant enough to be head of a sect, then he begins first to whisper out his choice discoveries to a few admirers and confidants, who will be sure to flatter him in it; and next to tell aloud to all the world how great a secret he had found out, with the inestimable value of it. And now at length comes in the use of sleight and cunning craftiness and all imaginable artifices; first to find out proper agents to commend and cry up the conceit, next to spread it in the most artful manner among the simple and least suspecting, and after that to form interests and make parties; and so, if possible, to have a public sanction set to it or a majority at least contending for it. Love of fame and glory is a very strong passion, and operates marvellously in persons of a warm complexion. 2. Observe how avarice or love of profit may sometimes do the same thing. There is a gain to be made in some junctures by perverting the truth and deceiving the populace. Men who are not worthy to teach in the Church, or who have been set aside for their insufficiency or immorality, may bring up new doctrines and draw disciples after them, for the sake of protection and maintenance or for filthy lucre. With such the vending of false doctrine is a trade and preaching a merchandise. Thus has avarice been the mother of heresies and has brought many deceivers into the Church of Christ; but they have contrived generally to give some plausible turn and colour to their inventions through their "sleight" and "cunning craftiness," in order to deceive the hearts of the simple and to beguile unwary and unstable souls. 3. One motive more—voluptuousness, or love of pleasure. As religious restraints set not easy upon flesh and blood, but bear hard upon corrupt nature, so men of corrupt minds will be ever labouring to invent and publish smooth and softening doctrines, such as may either qualify the strictness of the gospel rule or sap the belief of a

future reckoning. Many ancient heretics had such views as these in the first broaching of their heresies. Their design was to take off the awe and dread of a future judgment, and thereby to open a door to all licentiousness of life and dissoluteness of manners.

II. **Consider the case of the deceived who suffer themselves to be "tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine."** —They are supposed to be ignorantly, and in a manner blindly, led on by others, otherwise they would be rather confederates and confidants in managing the deceit, and so would be more deceivers than deceived. 1. Now as to those who are so ignorantly imposed upon. They are more or less to blame, according as their ignorance is more or less blamable; and that, again, will be more or less blamable, according as it is more or less affected or wilful. There are, I think, three cases which will take in all sorts of men who suffer themselves to be deceived in things of this kind. The first is of those who have no opportunity, no moral possibility of informing themselves better; the second is of those who might inform themselves better, but do not; the third of those who might also be better informed, but will not. If they be "like children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine," yet if they are really children in understanding and are overborne by others in such a way as is morally irresistible considering their circumstances, then it seems to be their misfortune to be so imposed upon rather than their fault, and so is not imputable. 2. A second case is of those who may inform themselves better but neglect to do it. I suppose it to be merely neglect in them, not design. Perhaps they have little or no leisure for inquiries; they are taken up with worldly cares and business. They have a very great esteem and value for the man who so misleads them, and they know no better, but swallow everything he says without considering; or they are not aware of any ill consequences of the doctrine, see or suspect no harm in it. They are much to blame in this affair, because God has given them the faculty of reason, which ought not to be thus left to lie dormant and useless. Men who can be sharp enough in secular affairs to prevent being imposed upon may and ought to have some guard upon themselves with respect also to their spiritual concernments. 3. There is yet a third sort of men, worse than the former, who suffer themselves to be deceived and might know better, but will not; that is to say, their ignorance is affected and wilful, they "love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." These are such as readily run in with "every wind of doctrine" which hits their taste and chimes in with their favourite inclinations. They admit the doctrine because they like it, and they easily believe it true because they would have it so. It is with this kind of men that deceivers prevail most and make their harvest.

III. **Some advices proper to prevent our falling in with either.**—The best preservative in this case is an honest and good heart, well disposed towards truth and godliness, having no by-ends to serve, no favourite lust or passion to indulge. If any man is but willing to know and to do God's commandments, he will easily discern in most cases whether a doctrine be of God or whether it be of men. The evidences of the true religion and of its main doctrines are so bright and strong when carefully attended to, that common sense and reason are sufficient to lead us, when there is no bias to mislead us. For several years last past rude and bold attacks have been made against the important doctrines of Christianity and against all revealed religion, and this is what they are still carrying on with exquisite subtlety and craftiness many ways and with a great deal of fruitless pains and labour. For I may have leave to suppose that no man can in this case be deceived who has not first a desire to be so, and is not the dupe and bubble to his own lust and vices.—*Dr. Waterland.*

Ver. 15. *Speaking the Truth in Love*—1. A different thing from the irritating candour of the professed friend. 2. Implies an experimental knowledge of the truth and its spiritual mission. 3. Is the most effectual way of winning a hearing and gaining adherents. 4. A method conspicuously exemplified in the teaching of Christ.

Growth into Christ in Love and Truth.

I. **The standard of Christian excellence—Christ's headship.**—1. The prominent notion suggested is His rank in the universe. He rules as God in creation. But evidently the apostle does not mean this in the text. We are to grow into Him as Head. Growth into Christ's Godhead is impossible. God-like we may, God we cannot even by truth and love, become. 2. He is the Head as being the Source of spiritual life. This is implied in metaphor. The highest life-powers—sensation, feeling, thought—come from the brain. To one who has read the history of those times, there is an emphatic truth in Christ's being the life of the world. The world was like a raft becalmed in the tropics—some of its freight dead and baking in the sun, some sucking as if for moisture from dried casks, and some sadly, faintly looking for a sail. Christ's coming to that world was as life to the dead, imparting new impulse to human heart and human nature. It was like rain and wind coming to that bark—once more it cuts the sea, guided by a living hand. So also with each man who drinks Christ's Spirit. He becomes a living character. Not sustained on dogmas or taken-up opinions, but alive with Christ. 3. He is Head as chief of the human race. Never had the world seen, never again will it see, such a character. Humanity found in Him a genial soil, and realised God's idea of what man was meant to be. He is chief. Nothing comes near Him.

II. **Progress towards the standard of Christian excellence.**—"We grow up into Him in all things.

1. *Growth in likeness to Him.*—The human soul was formed for growth, and that growth is infinite. The acorn grows into the oak, the child into the philosopher. And at death the soul is not declining; it is as vigorous as ever. Hence nothing but an infinite standard will measure the growth of the soul of man.

2. *Growth in comprehension of Him.*—Christ is not comprehensible at first. Words cannot express the awe with which a man contemplates that character when it is understood. This is the true heroic, this the only God-like, this the real divine. From all types of human excellence I have made my choice for life and death—Christ.

III. **The approved means of growth the mode of progress.**—"Speaking the truth in love." Truth and love—and these joined. To "grow into Christ" we must have both traits of character. Would you be like Christ? Cultivate love of beauty and tenderness. His soul was alive to beauty. He noted the rising and the setting sun, the waving corn, the lily of the field. His was love which insult could not ruffle nor ribaldry embitter, and which only grew sweeter and sweeter. Would you be like Christ? Be true! He never swerved. He was a martyr to truth. Would He soften down truth for the young man whom He loved, or make it palatable? No; not for friendship, not for love, nor for all the lovely things this world has to show. "One thing thou lackest: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me." That was "speaking the truth in love." There is no good to be got out from Christ, except by being made like Him. There is no pardon, no blessing, separate from inward improvement. Sanctity of character alone blesses. Each man is his own hell and his own heaven. God Himself cannot bless you unless He gives you His own character.—*F. W. Robertson.*

Ver. 16. *The Law of Mutual Dependence.*

I. This text admonishes us of **the manifold instruments and agencies on whose concurrence and harmonious action the prosperity and the perfection of the Christian Church depend.**—It likens the Church to that most complicated, admirable machine, the human body, which only produces its proper results, the preservation and comfort of human life, by the healthful tone and right performance of its various powers and functions. We live, and are at ease, in virtue of the sound condition and regular operation of all the multitude of parts and organs which compose our corporeal frame. Should the heart refuse to circulate the blood, and to diffuse through all the various channels of inter-communication with the members of the body its life-sustaining pulses, death ensues in a moment.

II. **The same law of mutual dependence reigns in improved civilised society.**—In man, social as well as individual, the body politic and social must prosper, or its members suffer. The individual too cannot suffer without inflicting, by so much, an injury on the community. The ruler and the subject, the capitalist and the operative, the merchant, the farmer, the scholar and the artisan, the manufacturer and the sailor, perform functions alike indispensable to the great result aimed at or desired by all communities. They are mutually dependent, are indissolubly united in interest by ties not always visible, but yet real and essential to the well-being of all parties.

III. I hasten to **apply my subject to the Church**, where the text finds illustration yet more pertinent and affecting. The Church is a community, organised, with special ends to be accomplished, and endowed with special capabilities and adaptations, yet having many points of resemblance to human society in general. All the members and all the officers of the Church are appointed and honoured of God to be co-workers with Himself, co-agents with the Holy Ghost, in the edification of the body of Christ. The pastor, not less in the study, when he gathers things new and old from holy books and common, than in the pulpit, or in breaking the bread of the sacrament at the altar, or in the sick-chamber—all the subordinate lay ministries devoted to godly counsel, to faithful admonition, or to the management and conversation of the material interests of the Church—the pious mother nurturing up her children in God's love—the sufferer on a bed of languishing, giving forth blessed examples of patience and resignation and faith—the teacher of the Sabbath school—they who, in the Spirit, lift up our joyous songs of praise in the sanctuary—all who pray in the closet or in the congregation, are, and should be deemed, essential parts of that good, great system through whose wondrous, harmonious working God is pleased to renew and sanctify souls and train them up to be heirs of glory. Who, in this great co-partnership for honouring Christ, has any ground of complaint?—the foot, that it is not the head? the eye, that it is too feeble to do the functions of the brawny arm? the ears, that they cannot do the office of locomotion? Every part is indispensable. None can say which is most important in God's plan; and achievements, ascribed hastily to the eloquence of the preacher, often stand credited in the record kept above to the prayer of faith.—*Dr. Olin.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 17—24.

A Thorough Moral Transformation—

I. **Contrasted with a former life of sin.**—1. *A state of self-induced mental darkness.* "Having the understanding darkened, . . . because of the blindness of their heart" (ver. 18). Infidelity is more a moral than a mental obliquity. The

mind is darkened because the heart is bad. Men do not see the truth because they do not want to see it. The light that would lead to righteousness and to God is persistently shut out.

2. *A state of moral insensibility that abandoned the soul to the reckless commission of all kinds of sin.*—"Who being past feeling have given themselves over . . . to work all uncleanness with greediness" (ver. 19). Sin is made difficult to the beginner. The barriers set up by a tender conscience, the warnings of nature, the teachings of providence, the light of revelation, the living examples of the good, have all to be broken down. Early transgressions are arrested by the remorse they occasion; but gradually the safeguards are neglected and despised, until the habit is acquired of sinning for the love of sin. A spirit of recklessness ensues, the reins are relaxed and then thrown upon the neck of the passions, and the soul is abandoned to the indulgence of all kinds of iniquity.

> "We are not worst at once. The course of evil
> Is of such slight source an infant's hand
> Might close its breach with clay;
> But let the stream get deeper, and we strive in vain
> To stem the headlong torrent."

3. *A state that rendered all mental activities worthless.*—"Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind" (ver. 17). The art of right thinking was lost. For the man that will not think, think clearly and justly, the calamities and the raptures of life, the blessing and the curse, have no meaning. They evoke neither gratitude nor fear. The beauties of nature, as they sparkle in the stars, or shine in the flowers, or gleam in the coloured radiance of the firmament, are unheeded. The voice of God that speaks in the events of daily life has no lesson for him. The senses, which are intended as the avenues of light and teaching to the soul, are dulled by inaction, clogged by supine indifference, and polluted and damaged by inveterate sin. When the reason is poisoned at its source, all its deductions are aimless and worthless.

II. **Effected by the personal knowledge of the truth in Christ.**—"But ye have not so learned Christ, . . . as the truth is in Jesus" (vers. 20, 21). The gospel has introduced to the world the principles of a great moral change. It announces Christ as the light of the world—a light that shines through all the realms of human life. The diseased reason is restored to health, the intellectual faculties have now a theme worthy of their noblest exercise, and are made stronger and more reliable by being employed on such a theme, and the moral nature is lifted into a purer region of thought and experience. The world is to be transformed by the moral transformation of the individual, and that transformation is effected only by the truth and a personal faith in Christ.

III. **Involves the renunciation of the corrupting elements of the former life.**—"That ye put off . . . the old man, which is corrupt" (ver. 22). The inward change is evidenced by the outward life. The old man dies, being conquered by the new. Corruption and decay marked every feature of the old Gentile life. It was gangrened with vice. It was a life of fleshly pleasure, and could end in only one way—in disappointment and misery. The new moral order inaugurated by the gospel of Christ effected a revolution in human affairs, and the corrupting elements of the old order must be weeded out and put away. An excellent man in London kept an institution near the Seven Dials at his own expense. He spent his nights in bringing the homeless boys from the streets into it. When they came in he photographed them, and then they were washed, clothed, and educated. When he sent one out, having taught him a trade, he photographed him again. The change was marvellous, and was a constant reminder of what had been done for him. The change effected in us by the grace of God not only contrasts with our former life, but should teach us to hate and put away its corrupting sins.

IV. **Evidenced in investing the soul with the new life divinely created and constantly receiving progressive renewal by the Spirit** (vers. 23, 24).—It is a continual rejuvenation the apostle describes; the verb is present in tense, and the newness implied is that of recency and youth, newness in point of age. But the new man to be put on is of a new kind and order. It is put on when the Christian way of life is adopted, when we enter personally into the new humanity founded in Christ. Thus two distinct conceptions of the life of faith are placed before our minds. It consists, on the one hand, of a quickening constantly renewed in the springs of our individual thought and will; and it is at the same time the assumption of another nature, the investiture of the soul with the divine character and form of its being. The inward reception of Christ's Spirit is attended by the outward assumption of His character as our calling amongst men. The man of the coming times will not be atheistic or agnostic; he will be devout: not practising the world's ethics with the Christian's creed; he will be upright and generous, manly and God-like (*Findlay*).

Lessons.—1. *Religion is a complete renewal of the soul.* 2. *The soul is renewed by the instrumentality of the truth.* 3. *The renewal of the soul is the renewal of the outward life.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 17, 19. *The Gentile Life—a Warning.*

I. **The Gentiles walked in the vanity of their minds.** — The false deities the Gentiles worshipped are called vanities. The prevalence of idolatry is a melancholy proof of the depravity of human nature. Atheism and idolatry proceed not from the want of sufficient evidence that there is one eternal, all-perfect Being, but from that corruption of heart which blinds the understanding and perverts the judgment.

II. **The heathens were darkened in their understanding.**—Not in respect of natural things, for in useful arts and liberal sciences many of them greatly excelled; but in respect of moral truth and obligation. Their darkness was owing, not solely to the want of revelation, but to the want of an honest and good heart. Religion consists not merely in a knowledge of and assent to divine truths, but in such conformity of heart to their nature and design, and in such a view of their reality and importance as will bring the whole man under their government.

III. **They were alienated from the life of God.**— They walked according to the course of the world, not according to the will of God. Their alienation was through ignorance. Particular wrong actions may be excused on the ground of unavoidable ignorance. This ignorance had its foundation in the obstinacy and perverseness of the mind. Such a kind of ignorance, being in itself criminal, will not excuse the sins which follow from it.

IV. **They were become past feeling.** —This is elsewhere expressed by a conscience seared with a hot iron. By a course of iniquity the sinner acquires strong habits of vice. As vicious habits gain strength, fear, shame, and remorse abate. Repeated violations of conscience blunt its sensibility and break its power.

V. **They gave themselves over to lasciviousness.**—If we break over the restraints the gospel lays upon us, and mock the terrors it holds up to our view, we not only discover a great vitiosity of mind, but run to greater lengths in the practice of iniquity. As water, when it has broken through its mounds, rushes on with more impetuous force than the natural stream, so the corruptions of the human heart, when they have borne down the restraints of religion, press forward with more violent rapidity, and make more awful devastation in the soul

than where these restraints had never been known.

Reflections.—1. *How extremely dangerous it is to continue in sin under the gospel.* 2. *You have need to guard against the beginnings of sin.* 3. *Christians must be watchful lest they be led away by the influence of corrupt example.* 4. *Religion lies much in the temper of the mind.*—*Lathrop.*

Vers. 17, 18. *The Life of God.*

I. **There is but one righteousness, the life of God; there is but one sin, and that is being alienated from the life of God.**—One man may commit different sorts of sins from another—one may lie, another may steal; one may be proud, another may be covetous; but all these different sins come from the same root of sin, they are all flowers off the same plant. And St. Paul tells us what that one root of sin, what that same devil's plant, is, which produces all sin in Christian heathen. It is that we are every one of us worse than we ought to be, worse than we know how to be, and, strangest of all, worse than we wish or like to be. Just as far as we are like the heathen of old, we shall be worse than we know how to be. For we are all ready enough to turn heathens again, at any moment. They were alienated from the life of God—that is, they became strangers to God's life; they forgot what God's life and character was like; or if they even did awake a moment, and recollect dimly what God was like, they hated that thought. They hated to think that God was what He was, and shut their eyes and stopped their ears as fast as possible. And what happened to them in the meantime? What was the fruit of their wilfully forgetting what God's life was? St. Paul tells us that they fell into the most horrible sins—sins too dreadful and shameful to be spoken of; and that their common life, even when they did not run into such fearful evils, was profligate, fierce, and miserable. And yet St. Paul tells us all the while they knew the judgment of God, that those who do such things are worthy of death.

II. **These men saw that man ought to be like God; they saw that God was righteous and good; and they saw, therefore, that unrighteousness and sin must end in ruin and everlasting misery.**—So much God had taught them, but not much more; but to St. Paul He had taught more. Those wise and righteous heathen could show their sinful neighbours that sin was death, and that God was righteous; but they could not tell them how to rise out of the death of sin into God's life of righteousness. They could preach the terrors of the law, but they did not know the good news of the gospel, and therefore they did not succeed; they did not convert their neighbours to God. Then came St. Paul and preached to the very same people, and he did convert them to God; for he had good news for them, of things which prophets and kings had desired to see, and had not seen themselves, and to hear, and had not heard them. And so God, and the life of God, was manifested in the flesh and reasonable soul of a man; and from that time there is no doubt what the life of God is, for the life of God is the life of Christ. There is no doubt now what God is like, for God is like Jesus Christ.

III. **Now what is the everlasting life of God, which the Lord Jesus Christ lived perfectly,** and which He can and will make every one of us live, in proportion as we give up our hearts and wills to Him, and ask Him to take charge of us and shape us and teach us? And God is perfect love, because He is perfect righteousness; for His love and His justice are not two different things, two different parts of God, as some say, who fancy that God's justice had to be satisfied in one way and His love in another, and talk of God as if His justice fought against His love, and desired the death of a sinner, and then His love fought against His justice, and desired to save a sinner. The old heathen did not

like such a life, therefore they did not like to retain God in their knowledge. They knew that man ought to be like God; and St. Paul says they ought to have known what God was like—that He was love; for St. Paul told them He left not Himself without witness, in that He sent rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness. That was, in St. Paul's eyes, God's plainest witness of Himself—the sign that God was love, making His sun shine on the just and on the unjust, and good to the unthankful and the evil—in one word, perfect, because He is perfect love. But they preferred to be selfish, covetous, envious, revengeful, delighting to indulge themselves in filthy pleasures, to oppress and defraud each other.

IV. **God is love.**—As I told you just now, the heathen of old might have known that, if they chose to open their eyes and see. But they would not see. They were dark, cruel, and unloving, and therefore they fancied that God was dark, cruel, and unloving also. They did not love love, and therefore they did not love God, for God is love. And therefore they did not love each other, but lived in hatred and suspicion and selfishness and darkness. They were but heathen. But if even they ought to have known that God was love, how much more we? For we know of a deed of God's love, such as those poor heathen never dreamed of. And then, if we have God abiding with us, and filling us with His eternal life, what more do we need for life, or death, or eternity, or eternities of eternities? For we shall live in and with and by God, who can never die or change, an everlasting life of love.—*C. Kingsley.*

Ver. 19. *Past Feeling.*—1. Though original sin has seized upon the whole soul, yet the Lord has kept so much knowledge of Himself and of right and wrong in the understanding of men as they may know when they sin, and so much of conscience as to accuse or excuse according to the nature of the fact, whereupon follows grief or joy in their affections. Wicked men may arrive at such a height of sin as to have no sense of sin, no grief, nor check, nor challenge from conscience from it. 2. A watchful conscience doing its duty is the strongest restraint from sin; and where that is not, all other restraints will serve for little purpose. For a man to be given over to lasciviousness without check or challenge argues a great height of impiety. 3. As upon senseless stupidity of conscience there follows an unsatiableness in sinning, especially in the sin of uncleanness, so when a man comes to this, he is then arrived at the greatest height of sin unto which the heathens, destitute of the knowledge of God, ever attained.—*Fergusson.*

Vers. 20-24. *Putting off the Old Nature and putting on the New.*

I. **The change here spoken of is radically seated in the mind.**—These terms do not import the creation of new powers and faculties, but the introduction of new tempers and qualities. The renovation enlightens the eyes of the understanding, and gives new apprehensions of divine things. It purifies the affections and directs them to their proper objects. There are new purposes and resolutions.

II. **He who is renewed puts off the old man.**—The new spirit is opposite to sin and strives against it. The Christian mortifies the affections and lusts of the flesh because he has found them deceitful. He in deliberate and hearty purpose renounces all sin. He abstains from the appearance of evil.

III. **He puts on the new man.**—As the former signifies a corrupt temper and conversation, so the latter must intend a holy and virtuous disposition and character. The new man is renewed in righteousness and true holiness. He not only ceases to do evil, but learns to do well.

IV. **The pattern according to**

which the new man is formed is the image of God.—The likeness must be understood with limitations. The image of God in us bears no resemblance to the perfections in the divine nature, such as immensity, immutability, and independence. There are some essential properties of the new man to which there is nothing analogous in the deity. Reverence, obedience, trust, and resignation are excellencies in rational creatures; but cannot be ascribed to the Creator. In those moral perfections in which the new man is made like God there is only a faint resemblance, not an equality. The new man resembles God in mercy and goodness, in holiness, in truth.

V. **This great change is effected by the gospel.**—It was the consequence of their having learned Christ. The first production and improvement of this change is the work of divine grace, and the Spirit of God works on the soul by means of the word. To this change the use of means and the grace of God are both necessary.

VI. **The change is great.**—Let none imagine he is a subject of this change merely because he entertains some new sentiments, feels transient emotions, or has renounced some of his former guilty practices. The real nature and essence of conversion is the same in all.—*Lathrop.*

Religious Affections are attended with a Change of Nature.

I. **What is conversion?**—1. A change of nature. 2. A permanent change. 3. A universal change. 4. A union of God's Spirit with the faculties of the soul. 5. Christ by His grace savingly lives in the soul.

II. **Its connection with sanctification.**—1. All the affections and discoveries subsequent to the first conversion are transforming. 2. This transformation of nature is continuous until the end of life, when it is brought to perfection in glory.

III. **Reflections.**—1. Allowance must be made for the natural temper. 2. Affections which have no abiding effect are not spiritual and gracious. 3. In some way it will be evident, even to others, that the true disciple has been with Jesus.—*Lewis O. Thompson.*

Ver. 23. *The Christian Spirit, a New Spirit.*

I. **There are some changes in men which come not up to the renewed spirit, and yet are too often rested in.**—1. The assuming of a new name and profession is a very different thing from a saving change in the temper of the mind. We may be of any profession, and yet be unrenewed. People value themselves upon wearing the Christian name, instead of that of Pagan, or Jew, or Mahometan; or upon being styled Papists or Protestants; or upon their attaching themselves to one or another noted party, into which these are subdivided, and upon such a new appellation they are too ready to imagine that they are new men: whereas we may go the round of all professions, and still have the old nature remaining in full force. 2. A bare restraint upon the corrupt spirit and temper will not come up to this renovation, though the one may sometimes be mistaken for the other. The light of nature may possess conscience against many evils, or a sober education lay such a bridle upon the corrupt inclination as will keep it in for a season, the fear of punishment or of shame and reproach may suppress the outward criminal act, while the heart is full of ravening and wickedness. Therefore, though it is a plain sign of an unrenewed mind if a man live in any course of gross sin, yet it is not safe to conclude merely from restraints that a man is truly renewed. 3. A partial change in the temper itself will not amount to such a renovation as makes a true Christian. Indeed, in one sense the change is but partial in any in this life; there will be remains of disorder in all the powers of the soul, so as to exclude a pretence to absolute perfection. It is not enough to have the mind filled with sound

knowledge and useful notions, nor barely to give a dead assent to the doctrines of the gospel, unless we believe with the heart, and the will and affections be brought under the power of those truths; and even here there may be some alternation, and yet a man not be renewed. Nor is it sufficient that we should find ourselves disposed to some parts of goodness, while our hearts are utterly averse to others which are equally plain. And therefore, though we should be of a courteous, peaceable, and kind temper towards men; though we should be inclined to practise justice, liberality, truth, and honesty in our transactions with them, and to temperance and chastity in our personal conduct; though these are excellent branches of the Christian spirit; yet if there be not a right temper towards God also, if the fear and love of God are not the ruling principles of the soul, there is an essential defect in the Christian spirit.

II. **A particular view of this renovation in some principal acts of the mind.**—1. The mind comes to have different apprehensions of things, such as it had not before. The new creation begins with light, as the old is represented to do. Light bearing in, and the mind being fixed in attention, man discerns the great corruption of his heart, and the badness of the principles and ends which governed him in the appearances of goodness, upon which he valued himself before. And so the excellency and suitableness of Christ, in all His offices, and the necessity of real, inward holiness, appear in quite another manner to his soul than hitherto. 2. The practical judgment is altered. This light, shining with clearness and strength into the mind, unsettles and changes the whole practical judgment by which a man suffered himself to be governed before in the matters of his soul. He judges those truths of religion to be real which once had no more force with him than doubtful conclusions, and accordingly he cannot satisfy himself any longer barely not to disbelieve them, but gives a firm and lively assent to them. 3. A new turn is given to the reasoning faculty, and a new use made of it. When the word of God is mighty it casts down imaginations; so we render the original word (2 Cor. x. 5). It properly signifies "reasonings." Not that the faculty itself is altered, or that when men begin to be religious they lay aside reasoning: then in truth they act with the highest reason; they reason most justly and most worthy of their natures. But now the wrong bias, which was upon the reasoning faculty from old prejudices and headstrong inclinations, is in a good measure taken off; so that instead of its being pressed at all adventures into the service of sin, it is employed a better way, and concludes with more truth and impartiality. 4. There is an alteration in a man's governing aim, or chief end. This is like the centre, to which all inferior aims and particular pursuits tend. The original end of a reasonable creature must be to enjoy the favour of God as his supreme happiness, to be acceptable and pleasing to him. By the disposition of depraved nature we are gone off from this centre, and have changed our bias, from God to created good, to the pleasing of the flesh, to the gratification of our own humour, or to the obtaining of some present satisfaction, according to the prevailing dictate of fancy or appetite. This makes the greatest turn that can be in the spirit of the mind; all must be out of course till this be set right. Now it is the most essential part of the new nature to bring a sinner in this respect to himself, that is, to bring him back to God. All the light he receives, all the rectification of his judgment, is in order to this; and when this is well settled, everything else, which was out of course before, will return to its right channel. 5. There is hereupon a new determination to such a course of acting as will most effectually secure this end. As long as this world is the chief good which a man has in view, he contrives the best

ways he can think of to promote his particular ends in it. But when the favour of God comes to have the principal share in his esteem, he carefully examines and heartily consents to the prescribed terms of making that sure. Now he is desirous to be found in Christ upon any terms. 6. The exercise of the affections becomes very different. A change will appear in this respect, through the different turns of his condition as well as in the prevailing tenor of his practice. While a man is a stranger to God and blind to the interests of his soul, he is little concerned how matters lie between God and him. But a sinner come to himself is most tenderly concerned at anything that renders his interests in God doubtful or brings his covenant-relation into question; and nothing sets the springs of godly sorrow flowing so much as the consciousness of guilt, or of any unworthy behaviour to God.

Lessons.—1. *Let us seriously examine our own minds, whether we can discern such an alteration made in our spirit.* 2. *If we must answer in the negative, or have just ground to fear it, yet let us not despair of a change still, but apply ourselves speedily in the appointed way to seek after it.* 3. *Let the best retain a sense of the imperfection of the new nature in them, and of their obligation still to cultivate it, till it arrive at perfection.—Dr. Evans.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 25—32.

Christian Principles applied to Common Life.

Let us put these principles into the form of concrete precepts.

I. **Be truthful.**—"Putting away lying, speak every man truth, . . . for we are members one of another" (ver. 25). Society is so closely welded together and interdependent that the evil effects of a falsehood not only damage others but rebound ultimately towards the man who uttered it. A lie is a breach of promise; for whosoever seriously addresses his discourse to another tacitly promises to speak the truth, because he knows the truth is expected. Truth never was indebted to a lie. "In the records of all human affairs," writes Froude, "it cannot be too often insisted on that two kinds of truths run for ever side by side, or rather crossing in and out with each other form the warp and woof of the coloured web we call history: the one the literal and eternal truths corresponding to the eternal and as yet undiscovered laws of fact; the other the truths of feeling and thought, which embody themselves either in distorted pictures of outward things or in some entirely new creation—sometimes moulding and shaping history; sometimes taking the form of heroic biography, tradition, or popular legend."

II. **Avoid sinful anger.**—"Be ye angry, and sin not: . . . neither give place to the devil" (vers. 26, 27). Anger is not forbidden. A nature ardent for truth and justice burns with indignation against cruelty and wrong. But it is a dangerous passion even for the best of men, and is apt to exceed the limits of prudence and affection. To nurse our wrath and brood over our imagined wrongs is to give place to the devil, who is ever near to blow up the dying embers of our anger. Plutarch tells us it was an ancient rule of the Pythagoreans that, if at any time they happened to be provoked by anger to abusive language, before the sun set they would take each other's hands, and embracing make up their quarrel. The Christian must not be behind the pagan in placability and forgiveness.

III. **Be honest.**—"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour" (ver. 28). Laziness is a fruitful source of dishonesty, and is itself dishonest. There are sensitive natures to whom it is very difficult to be dishonest. In Abraham Lincoln's youthful days he was a storekeeper's clerk. Once, after he had sold a woman a little bill of goods and received the money, he found on

looking over the account again that she had given him six and a quarter cents too much. The money burned in his hands until he had locked the shop and started on a walk of several miles in the night to make restitution before he slept. On another occasion, after weighing and delivering a pound of tea, he found a small weight upon the scales. He immediately weighed out the quantity of tea of which he had innocently defrauded the customer, and went in search for her, his sensitive conscience not permitting any delay. The thief is not reformed and made an industrious worker by simply showing him the advantages of honesty. The apostle appeals to a higher motive—sympathy for the needy—"That he may have to give to him that needeth." Let the spirit of love and brotherhood be aroused, and the indolent becomes diligent, the pilferer honest.

IV. **Be circumspect in speech.**—"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth" (ver. 29). The possession of a human tongue is an immense responsibility. Infinite good or mischief lies in its power. The apostle does not simply forbid injurious words; he puts an embargo on all that is not positively useful. Not that he requires all Christian speech to be grave and serious. It is the mere talk, whether frivolous or pompous—spoken from the pulpit or the easy-chair—the incontinence of tongue, the flux of senseless, graceless, unprofitable utterance, that he desires to arrest (*Findlay*).

V. **Grieve not the Holy Spirit** (ver. 30).—Perhaps in nothing do we grieve the Spirit more than by foolish and unprofitable speech, or by listening willingly and without protest to idle gossip and uncharitable backbiting. His sealing of our hearts becomes fainter, and our spiritual life declines, as we become indiscreet and vain in speech.

VI. **Guard against a malicious disposition.**—"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away, with all malice" (ver. 31). *Malice* is badness of disposition, the aptness to envy and hatred, which apart from any special occasion is always ready to break out in bitterness and wrath. *Bitterness* is malice sharpened to a point and directed against the exasperating object. *Wrath* and *anger* are synonymous, the former being the passionate outburst of resentment in rage, the latter the settled indignation of the aggrieved soul. *Clamour* and *railing* give audible expression to these and their kindred tempers. Clamour is the loud self-assertion of the angry man who will make every one hear his grievance; while the railer carries the war of the tongue into his enemy's camp and vents his displeasure in abuse and insult. Never to return evil for evil and railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing—this is one of the lessons most difficult to flesh and blood (*Findlay*).

VII. **Cherish a forgiving spirit.**—"Be ye kind, . . . forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you" (ver. 32). It is man-like to resent an injury; it is Christ-like to forgive it. It is a triumph of divine grace when the man who has suffered the injury is the most eager to effect a reconciliation. Dean Hook relates he was once asked to see a gentleman who had ill-treated him. Found him very thin and ill. Told me that he was conscious that his feelings and conduct had not been towards me what they ought to have been for years. I told him that whenever there was a quarrel there were sure to be faults on both sides, and that there must be no question as to the more or less, but the forgiveness must be mutual. I kissed his hand, and we wept and prayed together. O God, have mercy on him and me for Jesu's sake! I have had a taste of heaven where part of our joy will surely consist in our reconciliations.

Lessons.—1. *Religion governs the whole man.* 2. *True religion is intensely practical.* 3. *Religion gives a nameless charm to the commonest duties.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 25. *Truth between Man and Man.*

I. **The duty of veracity here recommended.**—1. *Truth is to be observed in common conversation.* People have more special need, in some respects, to be admonished of their obligations inviolably to maintain truth here; for many are more ready to allow themselves to transgress in what they account trivial instances than upon solemn occasions; and yet by such beginnings way is made for the disregard of truth, in the most considerable matters, in process of time. 2. Truth should be maintained in bearing testimony. A conscientious regard to truth will engage us to be very careful that we spread nothing to the lessening or reproach of our neighbour, of which we have not good assurance; that we publish not a defamation upon hearsay, nor take up, without sufficient grounds, "a report against our neighbour." If we are called to give public testimony between man and man, a sincere respect to truth will engage us to a careful recollection, before we give our testimony, as to what we can say upon the matter. It will dispose to lay aside affection on one hand and prejudice on the other, and impartially to relate the true state of things as far as we can bear witness to them, nakedly to represent facts as they have come within our notice. 3. Truth must be exercised in our promises and engagements, and veracity requires two things in relation to them: (1) That we really intend to perform them when they are made; (2) That we are careful of performance after they are made.

II. **The reason the apostle gives for the inviolable maintenance of truth: because we are members one of another.**—1. This argument is applicable to mankind in general. We are members one of another, as we partake of the same human nature, and in that respect are upon a level. We are members of society in common, entitled to the same rights, claims, and expectations one from another as men, and are mutually helpful and subservient as the members of the body are to each other; and the principal link that holds us together is mutual confidence, founded upon the hope of common fidelity. Now, lying makes void and useless the great instrument of society, the faculty of speech or writing. The power of speech was given us by our Creator, and the art of writing, since found out, on purpose that we might be able so to convey our sense to others, that they may discern it, where we pretend to express it, just as if they were so far privy to what passed in our minds. And unless truth be inviolably observed in everything, the bonds of human society cannot fail to be weakened. 2. This argument may be particularly applicable to Christians. We are members one of another in a more distinguishing sense, as we belong to the body of Christ. And this lays additional engagements upon all the visible members of that body to put away lying and to speak the truth one to the other,—in conformity to the common Father, to whom we belong, who is eminently styled "a God of truth"; in conformity to our head the Lord Jesus, there should be a strict observation of truth among Christians; in conformity to the Spirit that animates us, who is eminently described by this attribute, "the Spirit of truth."

Inferences.—1. This is one remarkable evidence how much Christianity is calculated for the benefit of mankind and the good of society at present, as well as for our everlasting welfare, in that it so strictly enjoins and enforces the exacted regard to truth. 2. We see thence upon how good reason the Christian religion strictly forbids common swearing. 3. All that name the name of Christ are concerned to see that they comply with the exhortation. 4. Christians should do all they can to promote truth among others, both for the honour of God, and the spiritual and eternal good of their

neighbours, and the general interest of society.—*Jeremiah Seed.*

The Sin of Falsehood.

I. **There are cases in which one may speak that which is not true and yet not be chargeable with lying, for he may have no intention to deceive.**

II. **The grossest kind of lying, or speaking a known falsehood under the awful solemnity of an oath.**—Men violate truth when they affix to words an arbitrary meaning or make in their own minds certain secret reservations with a design to disguise facts and deceive the hearers. When we express doubtful matters in terms and with an air of assurance, we may materially injure as well as grossly deceive our neighbour. Men are guilty of malicious falsehood when they repeat with romantic additions and fictitious embellishments the stories they have heard of a neighbour that they may excite against him severer ridicule or cast on his character a darker stain. Men may utter a falsehood by the tone of their voice, while their words are literally true.

III. **We are bound to speak truth in our common and familiar conversation.**—We must speak truth in our commerce with one another. In giving public testimony we must be careful to say nothing but truth, and conceal no part of the truth. We must adhere to truth when we speak of men's actions or characters. We must observe truth in our promises.

IV. **A regard to truth is a necessary part of the Christian character.**—Deceitfulness is contrary, not only to the express commands of the gospel, but to the dictates of natural conscience.

V. **The argument the apostle urges for the maintenance of truth.**—"We are members one of another." As men we are members one of another. As Christians we are children of the same God, the God of truth; we are disciples of the same Lord, the faithful and true Witness. If we walk in guile and deceit, if we practise vile arts of dishonesty, we contradict our human and our Christian character. We see the danger of profane language, as it leads to the grossest kind of falsehood, even to perjury in public testimony. We see how dangerous it is to practise those diversions which are attended with temptations to fraud.—*Lathrop.*

College Life. "For we are members one of another."

I. **It is for us who govern and teach to remember how great is our responsibility in those respects.**—We are not merely instructors but educators of youth. The question of what books we use or what vehicles of teaching we employ sinks into insignificance compared with the question what end it is we design in our teaching. Are we prepared to abdicate our higher functions of educators and to sink down to the lower one of teachers? Must we not, if we are true to our calling, strive to instil into you that manliness which springs from the fear of God, that truthfulness which is seen in the frank look and unshrinking eye, that obedience which is rendered in no spirit of servility as unto the Lord and not as unto men, that self-mastery which is the foundation of all wisdom and all power? If the soul is of more value than the body, if the life to come is of more importance than the life that now is, if the knowledge of God and His Christ is infinitely more precious than all the knowledge of this world and all the distinction to which it leads—then there can be no question that education is infinitely before instruction, that principles are higher than knowledge, that knowledge is only of value in proportion as it is pervaded and sanctified by the Spirit of Christ. But precept without example is powerless. A man whose life is pure and high may not open his lips, yet his very silence shall be eloquent for God. Day by day a virtue is going out of him; day by day he is giving strength to one who is wrestling with doubt or temptation; day by day he is a beacon to those who are tossed on the waves of irresolution and uncer-

tainty. The teacher, if he is to produce a powerful moral effect, if he is to mould character, if he is to leave an impress upon the minds and hearts of those whom he teaches, must be what he teaches, must live what he inculcates.

II. **And now I would place before you your duties.**—1. Keep distinctly before you the end and aim of your coming here—the ministry of Christ's Church. 2. You are members of a community. You are all united to one another. You have all common pursuits, common ends, common interests. You may all help greatly to make or to mar the lives and characters of those with whom you are in such constant and daily intercourse. Let this consideration have its full weight with you. Be but true to yourselves, and to the God who has called you to the knowledge of Himself and His Son Jesus Christ, and by you this college shall grow and prosper. If principles and aims such as those I have endeavoured to indicate prevail in a college, there will be a real and substantial harmony between those who govern and those who are governed. Let us strive one and all, teachers and taught, to make this our college a college of which none can be ashamed.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne* (*preached on the forty-sixth anniversary of St. David's College, Lampeter*).

Vers. 26, 27. *Sinful Anger.*

I. **These words are not an injunction to be angry, but a caution not to sin when we are angry.**—As there is in our nature a principle of resentment against injury, so there is in us a virtuous temper, a holy displeasure against moral evil.

II. **Anger is sinful when it rises without cause.**—Rash anger is sinful. Anger is sinful when it breaks out into indecent, reviling, and reproachful language; when it prompts to designs or acts of revenge; when it settles into malice.

III. **Neither give place to the devil.**—See that you subdue your lusts and rule your spirits. Arm yourselves with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Take time to consider whether any motive suggested in favour of sin is so powerful as the arguments the Scriptures offer against it. Our greatest danger is from ourselves.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 26. *Anger and Meekness.*

I. **In what cases our anger may be innocently indulged.**—1. On the approach of any injurious aggressor threatening our destruction, or using any act of violence that may endanger our safety. 2. How far soever the harsh gratings of anger may seem to be removed from the soft motions of benevolence, yet these sometimes, as oil does to steel, give an edge to our resentment; where it will be found not only innocent and excusable, but even commendable and generous. As in the natural system of the world there are some repelling qualities, which yet must conspire to aid the grand power of attraction; so even those passions which, considered in a simple view, have but an unfriendly and unsociable aspect, are yet, in their general comprehension, aiding and assisting to preserve inviolable the bonds of the great community. 3. Our anger is apt to kindle at the apprehension of a slight or an affront, a contempt or reproach thrown upon us; on which occasions, if the apprehension be well grounded, our resentment, to a certain degree, must be allowed to be excusable, and so not sinful. Our tameness in these instances would be construed into stupidity, and be treated as such by the pert and petulant. 4. We may not only be angry without sinning in the instances alleged, as we sometimes may sin in not being angry. God, who designed human society, designed the good of it; and that good to be promoted by every individual to the utmost of his power. Hereby there is tacitly committed to every man a kind of trust and guardianship of virtue, whose rights

obliged to support and maintain in proportion to his abilities; not only by example, by advice and exhortation, but even by reproof and resentment, suitable to the circumstances of the offender and the offence.

II. **When our anger becomes intemperate and unlawful.**—1. When it breaks out into outrageous actions; for then, like a boisterous wind, it quite puts out that light which should guide our feet in the way of peace; it dethrones our reason, and suspends its exercise. An extravagance of this kind is the more dangerous, and therefore the more sinful, because, though the impulse of passion should meet with no opposition to inflame it—which, however, is generally the case—yet, when it has worked the blood into so violent a ferment, it is apt of itself to redouble its force. And no one can tell what fury, wound up to the highest pitch, may produce. 2. Anger becomes unlawful when it vents itself in unseemly and reviling language. It were to be wished that those who have such a peculiar delicacy of feeling when they are affronted would abstain from all appearance of an affrontive and disrespectful behaviour to others; that they who are so quick to receive would be as slow to give an affront. On the contrary, it often happens that they only feel for themselves; they are not the least sensible of the indignities offered to others. How frequently do those who are highly enraged pass a general and undistinguishing censure upon a man's character? 3. We are not always to judge of the sinfulness of anger from the open and undignified appearance of it, either in our words or actions; it may be concealed and treasured up in our thoughts, and yet retain as much malignity as when it immediately breaks out and discovers itself in contumelious language or acts of violence. For by brooding in the mind it becomes the parent of a very untoward issue, malice, and hatred. Malice is a cool and deliberate resentment; but sometimes more keen and malevolent than that which is rash and precipitate. It is like a massive stone, slowly raised, but threatening the greater danger to him on whom it shall fall. Anger is yet sinful when encouraged in our thoughts to the degree of hatred.

III. **Consider its opposite virtue, meekness.**—Meekness is, as Aristotle long ago defined it, a due mean between tameness and stupidity on the one hand, and rage and fury on the other. It is not absolute freedom from passion, but such a command over it as to prevent our being transported beyond the bounds of humanity and good sense. It is this virtue which, if it does not give a man such a glaring and shining figure as some other good qualities, yet constitutes the most lovely, beautiful, and agreeable character, and gains unenvied praise. 1. A meek man will have sense enough to know when he is injured, and spirit enough to resent it; but then he will consider whether he can do more good by openly resenting the offence and punishing the offender than by overlooking it and passing it by. 2. A man of a meek temper will distinguish between a man's general standing sentiments when he is perfectly calm and undisturbed and his occasional sentiments when his spirits are ruffled and overheated. 3. A meek man will never be angry with a person for telling him what he imagines to be a fault in him, provided it be done in a private manner, and the advice be conveyed in the most palatable vehicle. 4. A man of a meek spirit is glad to be reconciled to the person who has offended or injured him, and therefore is ready to hearken to all overtures of accommodation. A meek man will show such an inclination and readiness to forgive the offences of others as if he had perpetual need of the same indulgence, but will so carefully avoid giving the least offence as if it might be thought he would forgive nobody.

Lessons.—1. Let us endeavour to acquire a greatness of mind: by this I do not mean arrogance, for that be-

speaks a little mind—a mind that can reflect on nothing within itself that looks great except arrogance; but a true greatness of mind arises from a true judgment of things, and a noble ascendency of the soul inclining us to act above what is barely our duty. It is rising to the sublime in virtue. This will create a reverence for ourselves, and will set us as far above the mean gratification of giving any real occasion of passion to others, as of being susceptible of it when an occasion may be given to us. 2. One of the ancients said that he had gained one advantage from philosophy: that it had brought him to wonder at nothing. But it looks as if we, the generality of us, were strangers in the world; we are ever expressing our surprise and wonder at everything; and thus surprise prepares the way for passion. We wonder that we should meet with such a behaviour, such a treatment, such an affront; whereas the greatest wonder is that we should wonder at it. 3. Nothing can have so prevalent a power to still all the undue agitations of passion so apt to arise from the various connections we have with the prejudices and passions of others, nothing so fit to induce a smooth and easy flow of temper, as a frequent application to the throne of grace, to beseech Him, who is the God of Peace, that His peace may rule in our hearts, that it may be the fixed and predominant principle there.—*Jeremiah Seed.*

Ver. 28. *A Warning against Theft.*

I. **Here is a general prohibition of theft.**—This supposes distinct rights and separate properties. Stealing is taking and carrying away another's goods in a secret manner and without his consent. The prohibition relates to every unfair, indirect, dishonest way by which one may transfer to himself the property of another.

II. **This prohibition of theft is a virtual injunction of labour.**—If a man may not live at the expense of others, he must live at his own; and if he has not the means of subsistence, he must labour to acquire them. No man has a right to live on charity so long as he can live by labour. The obligation to labour is not confined to the poor; it extends to all according to their several capacities.

III. **Every man must choose for himself an honest calling, and must work that which is good.**—A work in which a man makes gain by the expense and enriches himself by the loss of others is theft embellished and refined. Gaming, when it is used as an art to get money, is criminal, because it is unprofitable, and what one gains by it another must lose.

IV. **In all our labours we should have regard to the good of others.**—The man who is poor should aim to mend his circumstances and to provide not only for his immediate support but for his future necessities. The condition which subjects us to labour does not exempt us from obligations to beneficence. We must confine ourselves within our own proper sphere, for here we can do more good than elsewhere. In all our works, secular or spiritual, charity must direct us. Love is an essential principle in religion, and as essential in one man as another. —*Lathrop.*

St. Paul's Exaltation of Labour.

I. **St. Paul often recurs to the plain and quiet work of humble life.**—He enforces not only the duty of it, but how high the duty ranks; and if it is well done, how it raises those who do it. Having worked with his own hands, he appreciated the sterling test of honest attention to work. He knew what temptations there were to relax and to give in to the sense of tediousness day by day and hour by hour. St. Paul, who honours the industry of a slave, will not allow it to be dishonoured by the slave himself thinking himself superior to it, and discourages all high flights which set him at enmity with his work and draw him away from the sterling Christian yoke of humble labour to which he has been called in God's providence.

II. At the same time the apostle **does not honour all industry;** far from it. He always reprobates the covetous, money-getting spirit. He admires industry, but it must be industry which is consecrated by the motive; and the motive which he requires for it is that of duty—when a man fulfils in the fear of God the task which is allotted to him. Men form their religious standard by two distinct tests: one the law of conscience and obedience to God, the other what is striking to man. St. Paul's standard is seen in his sympathy with the work of the ruler of a household, with the work of a father or mother of a family, the work of hospitality and attention to strangers, the work of common trades and callings, the work even of the slave in doing his assigned daily tasks.

III. We see the spirit of this great apostle—how **it embraced the whole appointed lot of man,** from his highest to his most humble field of employment. He rejected nothing as mean or low that came by God's appointment; all was good, all was excellent, all was appropriate that He had commanded. The heathen valued all labour by which men became eloquent, or became able soldiers or statesmen; but they had not the slightest respect for the ordinary work of mankind. They thought this world made for the rich. How different is St. Paul's view! No work allotted to man is servile work in his eyes, because he has an insight into what faithful labour is—what strength of conscience it requires, what resistance to temptations and snares it demands. The word of God consecrates the ordinary work of man—it converts it into every one's trial, and as his special trial his special access to a reward also.—*J. B. Mozley.*

Ver. 29. *The Government of the Tongue.*

I. The apostle **cautions us against all loose and licentious language.**

II. **Enticing language is forbidden.**

III. **Corrupt communication includes all kinds of vain discourse;** all such language as offends Christian sobriety, seriousness, and gravity, savours of profaneness and impiety, or borders on obscenity and lewdness.

IV. **Instruction is useful to edifying.**

V. **Reproof conducted with prudence is useful to edifying.**

VI. **Exhortation is good for the use of edifying.**

VII. **Christians may edify one another by communicating things they have experienced in the course of the religious life.**

VIII. **Conversing on religious subjects in general is good for the use of edifying.**—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 30. *The Benefit conferred by the Spirit on Believers.*

I. **That believers are sealed by the Spirit implies that they are recognised and set apart and in a peculiar sense the divine property.**—1. A seal is often a distinguishing mark or token by which a claim to property may be shown and established (Rev. iii. 2, 3). 2. That believers are thus sealed proves that they are His in a peculiar manner. 3. The sense in which they are His is clearly brought out (1 Cor. iii. 23). They are Christ's by gift, by purchase, by conquest, by surrender. Christ is God's, and His people in Him. 4. They who are sealed are thus a peculiar people, separated to God's worship, service, and glory. 5. Have you recognised practically that you are God's?

II. **That believers are sealed implies that attempts will be made to alienate them from God's possession.**—1. A mark or token is affixed to that which is in danger of being taken away. 2. We are distinctly taught that believers are exposed to efforts to separate them from God (John x. 7-10, 27-29). 3. The activity of the wicked one seems in a great measure directed to this point. 4. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints does not lead him to indolence. 5. Your safety is not merely to get into the place of safety, but to continue there.

III. **That believers are sealed**

implies that they have received the impress of the divine Image.—1. The sealing is the work of the Spirit, whose office it is to regenerate and sanctify. 2. The seal is that which distinguishes the believer from the unbeliever, and the true distinguishing mark is regeneration. 3. We therefore conclude that the seal has engraven on it the image of God, which it leaves. 4. The confidence of no one should outrun his sanctification. 5. Can you discern the outline of the image? There are counterfeits.

IV. **That believers are sealed implies that, though associated and mixed up with others, they are not confounded with them.**—1. A distinguishing mark is necessary when things which are again to be separated and classified are mingled with each other. 2. The seal leads to recognition. Hence the believer is known by himself, fellow-believers, the world, the devil, angels, Christ, the Father. 3. This recognition takes place in time, at the judgment, in eternity.

V. **That believers are sealed implies that God will visit the earth with distinguishing judgments.**—In proof and illustration (Ezek. ix.; Rev. vii., ix.). The Passover. The destruction of Jerusalem. Now. The judgment day. Are you prepared for such a season?

VI. **That believers are sealed implies that they are in a state of reservation.**—A seal is a pledge, a signature. An engagement presently fulfilled needs no pledge.—*Stewart.*

The Office of the Holy Spirit and the Danger of grieving Him.

I. **His office is to seal us unto the day of redemption.**—That day in which the people of God will be put into complete possession of the blessings purchased for them by Christ. To seal us to this day is to prepare us and to set us apart from it, to fix such a mark on us as in that day shall distinguish us from others and make it fully appear to whom we belong. When a man sets his seal to a paper, he thereby declares his approbation of it and acknowledges it to be his own deed. Those who bear the seal of the Spirit will be approved by Christ and acknowledged for His own in the day of resurrection. A seal stamps its own image on the wax. The Spirit stamps on the soul the image of Himself. This seal is said to be the earnest of our inheritance. An earnest is a pledge of something to be bestowed and enjoyed hereafter—a part of it is already bestowed to assure us that in due time we shall receive the whole.

II. **He is not to be grieved.**—1. Beware of doing anything which your conscience, enlightened by the word of God, forbids you to do. 2. Beware of running into temptation. 3. Beware of indulging fleshly lusts. 4. Beware of practising deceit and falsehood. 5. Beware of profaning the Lord's Day. 6. Beware of cherishing evil and malignant tempers.—*E. Cooper.*

On Grieving the Holy Spirit.

I. **Our duty is to render to the Holy Spirit cheerful and universal obedience.**

II. **The Spirit is the great Sanctifier.**

III. **We must co-operate diligently in the production of the fruits of the Spirit.**

IV. **Our danger is in quenching the Spirit.**—Our light grows dim, and we gradually adopt evil habits. We neither see nor heed spiritual dangers. Religious sensibilities are blunted. How far any of us have gone in resisting the Spirit God alone knows. Many who resist great light and strong impressions seem never to feel again.—*Olin.*

Grieving the Spirit.

I. **Indifference and carelessness in religion** is opposition to the grace of God.

II. **Spiritual pride** grieves the divine Spirit.

III. The Spirit is grieved **when we neglect the means appointed for obtaining His influence.**

IV. **Opposition** to the strivings of the Spirit is another way in which He is often grieved.

V. There are **particular sins** which are opposite to the work of the Spirit. Impurity, intemperance, dissipation, and all the vices of sensuality. The indulgence of malignant passions grieves the Spirit. Contentions among Christians are opposite to the Spirit. Men grieve the Spirit when they ascribe to Him those motions and actions which are contrary to His nature. If they blindly follow every impulse of a heated imagination, every suggestion of the common deceiver, every motion of their own vanity and pride, they profane and blaspheme His sacred name.—*Lathrop.*

Grieve not the Spirit.—But wherewith can we so grieve Him? Alas! that one must rather ask, Wherein may he not? I fear that one of the things which will most amaze us when we open our eyes upon eternity will be the multitude of our own rudenesses to divine grace, that is, to God the Holy Ghost whose motions grace is. Oh, let not that His seal upon you, the gift of His Spirit, mark you as a deserter! O Holy Creator Spirit, come down once more into our souls in Thine own thrilling fire of life and light and heat, kindling our senses with Thy light, our hearts with Thy love! wash away our stains, bedew our dryness, heal our wounds, bend our stubbornness, guide our wanderings, that Thou, being the inmate of our hearts, the instructor of our reason, the strength of our will, we may see by Thy light whom as yet we see not and know Him who passeth knowledge, and through God may love God now as wayfarers, and, in the day of perfect redemption, in the beatific vision of our God!—*E. B. Pusey.*

The Sealing of the Spirit.—1. The seal is used in conveying and assuring to any person a title to his estate, in delivering which a part is put into the hands of the new proprietor. We are sealed as an assurance of our title to our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. 2. In sealing any person, the contra-part of the seal is impressed on that which is sealed. We are thus sealed by the Spirit, stamped with the image of God. 3. Sealing is used for preservation. It is by this we are to be preserved until that day. By grieving the Spirit we break this seal.—*E. Hare.*

Vers. 31, 32. *Vices to be renounced and Virtues to be cherished.*

I. **Put away all bitterness.**—All such passions, behaviour, and language as are disgusting and offensive to others, wound their tender feelings, and embitter their spirits. No temper is more inconsistent with the felicity of social life than peevishness.

II. **Put away wrath and anger.**—The former signifies heat of temper, the latter this heat wrought into a flame. Though anger, as a sense and feeling of the wrongs done us, is innocent and natural, all the irregular and excessive operations of it are sinful and dangerous.

III. **Put away all malice.**—This is a degree of passion beyond simple anger. It is a fixed, settled hatred, accompanied with a disposition to revenge. It is anger resting in the bosom and studying to do mischief. Malice is a temper which every one condemns in others, but few discern in themselves.

IV. **Put away all clamour and evil speaking.**—Clamour is noisy, complaining, and contentious language in opposition to that which is soft, gentle, and courteous. Never believe, much less propagate an ill report, of your neighbour without good evidence of its truth. Never speak evil of a man when your speaking may probably do much hurt, but cannot possibly do any good.

V. **Christians are to be kind one to another.**—Such kindness as renders us useful. Kindness wishes well to all men, prays for their happiness, and studies to promote their interest. It will reprove vice and lend its aid to promote knowledge and virtue.

VI. **Christians should be tenderhearted.**—They should not be guided

by a blind, instinctive pity; but by habitual goodness of heart, cultivated with reason, improved by religion, and operating with discretion. While they commiserate all who appear to be in affliction, they should regard among them the difference of characters and circumstances.

VII. **We are to forgive one another.**—Forgiveness does not oblige us tamely to submit to every insult and silently bear every injury. To those who have injured us we should maintain goodwill and exercise forbearance. God's forgiveness of our sins is urged as a motive to mutual forgiveness. "Even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." He who forgives not an offending brother will not be forgiven of his heavenly Father.—*Lathrop.*

Malice incompatible with the Christian Character.

I. **That we may be convinced of the hatefulness of a malignant temper look to the source whence it proceeds.**—From the bitterness of the fountain we may judge of the character of the water which it sends forth. From the corruptness of the tree we may estimate the character of the fruit. The author of malice is the devil.

II. Let us after the same manner **proceed to appreciate the loveliness of the opposite quality,** the quality of mercy and lovingkindness, by a reference to its Author. Malice is gratified by murder. In God we live and move and have our being. Malice is envious. God giveth us richly all things to enjoy. Malice is false and calumnious. God sent His Son into the world to give light to them that sit in darkness. Malice is resentful and vindictive, impatient of offence, and intemperate in requiring satisfaction. God is love.

III. Let us turn for a **further motive to the character and conduct of the Son of God.**—He has given us an example of the most profound humility, a temper in which malice has no portion, and which cannot exist independently of lovingkindness and tenderness of heart.

IV. **To the example of our blessed Redeemer let us add His commandments; and there arises another forcible motive to put away all malice and to be kind one to another.**—"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

V. **If we would avoid a malicious and cultivate a charitable temper, we must renounce the devil and all his works.**—We must triumph over those passions which he plants and propagates in the heart of man.—*R. Mant.*

Ver. 32. *Errors respecting Forgiveness of Sin.*

I. **That forgiveness of sin is unnecessary.**—Every sin is punished on the spot. This natural punishment is felt as long as the sin is indulged, and it ceases as soon as the sin is abandoned. This error may be exposed by a reference to the philosophy of human nature, to experience, and to Scripture.

II. **That forgiveness of sin is impossible.**—The consequences of every sin stretch out into infinity, and they cannot be annihilated without a supernatural interposition; but it would derogate from the supremacy of law to allow that a miracle is possible. The possibility of miracle is contrary neither to intuition nor to experience. A supernatural Being is the author of a supernatural system: creation, incarnation, the Bible, spiritual influence.

III. **That forgiveness of sin might be dispensed without an atonement.**—"If a man suffer insult or injury from his fellow-man, he ought to forgive him freely; why should not God?" Because He is God, and not man. He is the moral Governor of the universe, and must consult for the majesty of His law and the interests of His responsible creatures. Forgiveness without atonement would not satisfy the conscience of the awakened sinner.

IV. **That forgiveness of sin will not be bestowed till the day of judgment.**—Pardon through Christ is immediate. It is enjoyed as soon as we believe.

V. **That forgiveness of sin as freely**

offered in the gospel is inimical to morality.—"Pay a workman before he begins his work, and he will be indolent; pay him when he has finished his work, and he will be diligent." Not if he were an honest man, and no one is forgiven who is not sanctified. A sense of unpardoned guilt is the greatest hindrance to obedience. A sense of redeeming love the most powerful incentive.—*G. Brooks.*

Christian Forgiveness.

I. **The reality of forgiveness, or the grace of a forgiving spirit in us, lies not so much in our ability to let go or to be persuaded to let go the remembrance of our injuries, as in what we are able to do,** what volunteer sacrifices to make, what painstaking to undergo, that we may get our adversary softened to want or gently accept our forgiveness.

II. In all that you distinguish of a nobler and diviner life, in Christ's bearing of His enemies and their sins, He is simply showing **what belongs in righteousness to every moral nature from the uncreated Lord down to the humblest created intelligence.** Forgiveness, this same Christly forgiveness, belongs to all—to you, to me, to every lowest mortal that bears God's image.

III. **Christ wants you to be with Him in His own forgiveness.** He wants such a feeling struggling in your bosom that you cannot bear to have an adversary, cannot rest from your prayers and sacrifices and the lifelong suit of your concern, till you have gained him away from his wrong and brought him into peace. This in fact *is* salvation: to be with Christ in all the travail of His forgiveness. As Christ was simply fulfilling the right in His blessed ways of forgiveness, so we may conceive that He is simply fulfilling the eternal love. For what is right coincides with love, and love with what is right.

IV. When a true Christian goes after his adversary in such a temper as he ought—tender, assiduous, proving himself in his love by the most faithful sacrifices—**he is not like to stay by his enmity long.** As the heat of a warm day will make even a wilful man take off his overcoat, so the silent melting of forgiveness at the heart will compel it, even before it is aware, to let the grudges go. A really good man may have enemies all his life long, even as Christ had, and the real blame may be chargeable not against him, but against them.

V. **Have then Christian brethren under Christ's own gospel nothing better left than to take themselves out of sight of each other just to get rid of forgiveness,** going to carry the rankling with them, live in the bitterness, die in the grudges of their untamable passion? What is our gospel but a reconciling power even for sin itself, and what is it good for, if it cannot reconcile? No, there is a better way. Christ laid it on them by His own dear passion when He gave Himself for them, by His bloody sweat, His pierced hands, and open side, to go about the matter of forgiving one another even as He went about forgiving them.—*Bushnell.*

CHAPTER V.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Followers of God.**—R.V. *imitators.* St. Paul gathers up all duties into one expression, "imitation of God," and urges them on his readers by a reminder of their high birth laying them under obligation, and rendering their copying easier.

Ver. 2. **Walk in love.**—"Love must fulfil all righteousness; it must suffer law to mark out its path of obedience, or it remains an effusive, ineffectual sentiment, helpless to bless and save."

Ver. 3. **Let it not be once named.**—After the things themselves are dead let their names never be heard.

Ver. 4. **Nor jesting.**—"Chastened insolence," as Aristotle's description of it has been happily rendered. "Graceless grace" [of style], as Chrysostom called it. It is the oozing out of the essential badness of a man for whom polish and a versatile nature have done all they can.

Vers. 5, 6. **Because of these things cometh the wrath of God, etc.**—Look down beneath the pleasing manners to the nature. If such terms as are used in ver. 5 describe the man, he is simply one of Disobedience's children, and all his versatility will not avert the descending wrath of God.

Ver. 7. **Be not ye therefore partakers with them.**—Do not wish to share the frivolity and impiety of their life, as you would shun the wrath that inevitably awaits it. How could they so partake and continue to be what iii. 6 calls them?

Ver. 8. **Ye were . . . ye are . . . be.**—The lesson must be learnt, and therefore reiteration is necessary.

Ver. 9. **For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.**—Neither here nor at Gal. v. 22 does St. Paul intend a complete list of the fruits of the Spirit. St. John's tree of life bore "*twelve* manner of fruits." All Christian morality lies in the good, the right, and the true.

Ver. 10. **Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.**—Each is to be an assayer—rejecting all base alloys. Nothing must be accepted because it looks like an angel of light—"the spirits" must be put to the proof (1 John iv. 1).

Ver. 11. **Rather reprove them.**—It may be with a voice as firm as the Baptist's; it may be by gentle and yet unflinching "showing up" of certain proceedings (cf. St. John iii. 20). "This chastening reproof is an *oral* one," says Meyer.

Ver. 12. **It is a shame even to speak of.**—Though the only sign of their shame having touched them is that they seek the cover of secrecy, and our own cheeks burn as *we speak* of what *they do*, we must convict.

Ver. 13. **Made manifest by the light.**—Whatever the light falls upon is no longer of the darkness, but belongs to the light. Shame is one of the influences by which the light conquers a soul from darkness.

Ver. 14. **Wherefore He saith.**—What follows is "a free paraphrase from the Old Testament formed by weaving together Messianic passages—belonging to such a hymn as might be sung at baptisms in the Pauline Churches" (*Findlay*). The thought is that of the change from darkness to light—a change produced by the opening of the eyes to the light shining in the face of Jesus Christ.

Ver. 15. **See then that ye walk circumspectly.**—R.V. "Look then carefully how ye walk." The way of life must be one of exactitude; and that it may be so the steps must not be haphazard, but carefully taken.

Ver. 16. **Redeeming the time.**—R.V. margin, "buying up the opportunity." Seizing the crucial moment as eagerly as men bid for a desirable article at an auction sale. **Because the days are evil.**—A man in Paul's circumstances and with his consuming earnestness of spirit may be forgiven if he does not see everything rose-coloured.

Ver. 18. **Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess.**—The word for "excess" is found again in Tit. i. 6 as "riot," and in 1 Pet. iv. 4. In all three texts the warning against intoxication is near the word. In Luke xv. 13 we have the adverbial form—"riotously."

Ver. 19. **Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.**—When the spirit is elevated so that ordinary prose conversation is inadequate to express the feelings let it find vent in sacred music. St. James's advice to the "merry" heart is, "Sing psalms." The "psalm" is properly a song with accompaniment of a stringed instrument; "a 'hymn" must always be more or less of a *Magnificat*, a direct address of praise and glory to God." "Spiritual songs" were

"such as were composed by spiritual men and moved in the sphere of spiritual things" (*Trench*). No spiritual excitement, however highly wrought, can be injurious that flows between the banks of thanksgiving and mutual submission in the fear of God.

Ver. 20. **Giving thanks always for all things.**—If one who speaks as a philosopher merely can praise the "sweet uses of adversity" and discern the "soul of goodness in things evil," how much more should one believing Rom. viii. 28!

Ver. 21. **Submitting yourselves one to another.**—In another Church the endeavour to take precedence of each other had produced what a stranger might have taken for a madhouse (1 Cor. xiv. 23). St. Paul's word for "submitting" means "ranging yourselves beneath," and finds its illustration in our Lord's words, "Go and sit down in the lowest place" (Luke xiv. 10).

Ver. 22. **Submit yourselves.**—Same word as in previous verse; neither here nor there does it involve any loss of self-respect. The wife's tribute to her husband's worth is submission—the grace of childhood to *both parents* equally is obedience.

Ver. 23. **Christ is the head of the Church.**—Defending her at His own peril ("If ye seek Me, let these go their way"); serving her in utmost forgetfulness of self ("I am amongst you as he that serveth"); "Giving Himself up for her."

Ver. 25. **Husbands, love your wives.**—This will prevent the submission of the wife from ever becoming degrading—as submission to a tyrant must be.

Ver. 26. **That He might sanctify and cleanse.**—There is no "and" between "sanctify" and "cleanse" in what St. Paul wrote. "Sanctify it, having cleansed it" (R.V.). "I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified" (John xvii. 19).

Ver. 27. **Spot or wrinkle.**—"Spot," a visible blemish, used in the plural, figuratively, in 2 Pet. ii. 13, of men who disfigure Christian assemblies. "Wrinkle"—"a wrinkled bride" is an incongruity, just as the mourning which produces wrinkles is out of place in the bride-chamber (Matt. ix. 15).

Ver. 28. **As their own bodies.**—Not "as *they love* their own bodies" merely, but "as *being* their own." See ver. 31, "one flesh."

Ver. 31. **For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife.**—We must regard these words, not as a continuation of Adam's in Gen. ii. 23, but as the words of the narrator, who regards what our first father said as a mystical hint of the origin of marriage.

Ver. 32. **This is a great mystery.**—The meaning of which is known only to the initiated. Something having a significance beyond what appears on the surface. **But I speak.**—The "I" is emphatic: "*I* give *my* interpretation." *My* chief interest in this mystery is as it relates to Christ and to the Church.

Ver. 33. **Nevertheless.**—"I pursue the matter no further"; and though this mystical turn is given to the words, still in actual life let the husband love (ver. 25) and the wife show reverence (ver. 22). Let all the married among you apply the mystery to their own case, so that the husband may love the wife and the wife fear the husband.

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

The Life of Love—

I. **Is an imitating of the divine life.**—"Be followers of God: . . . walk in love" (vers. 1, 2). Though God is infinitely beyond us, and lifted above all heights, we are to aspire towards Him. When we contemplate His glorious perfections we are more deeply conscious of our limitations and sins, bend before Him in lowly awe, and seem to despair of ever being able to approach to anything within ourselves that can be like Him. Nevertheless God is the pattern of all excellence, and we can attain excellence ourselves only by imitating Him. The ideal character is ever above and beyond the seeker, growing more beautiful, but seeming as distant as ever. The life of God is the life of love—love is the essence of His nature and the crowning glory of all His perfections. The chief way in which He is imitable by us is in that direction: to love God is to be like Him. Our life, in all its impulses, outgoings, and accomplishments, must be suffused and penetrated with love. As the soul opens to the inflow of God's love and is filled with it, it becomes like God. Loving God is allowing God to love us. The love of God is the most transcendent revelation of the gospel. In Paris a little girl seven years old was observed to read the New Testament continually. Being asked what pleasure she found in doing so, she said, "It makes me wise,

and teaches how to love God." She had been reading the history of Martha and Mary. "What is the one thing needful?" asked her friend. "It is the love of God," she earnestly replied.

II. **Is befitting the relation in which the believer is divinely regarded.**—"Followers of God, as dear children" (ver. 1). God is our Father, and He loves us. That is enough; but how much is implied in that, who can tell? To realise the divine Fatherhood is to become acquainted with the love of God. When we discover we are dear to Him our hearts melt, our rebellion is conquered, we seek His forgiveness, we revel in His favour, we exult in His service. When we discover He has always loved us we are overwhelmed. A mother, whose daughter had behaved badly and at length ran away from home, thought of a singular plan to find the wanderer and bring her back. She had her own portrait fixed on a large handbill and posted on the walls of the town where she supposed her daughter was concealed. The portrait, without name, had these words printed underneath: "I love thee always." Crowds stopped before the strange handbill, trying to guess its meaning. Days elapsed, when a young girl at last passed by, and lifted her eyes to the singular placard. She understood: this was a message for her. Her mother loved her—pardoned her. Those words transformed her. Never had she felt her sin and ingratitude so deeply. She was unworthy of such love. She set out for home, and crossing the threshold was soon in her mother's arms. "My child!" cried the mother, as she pressed her repentant daughter to her heart, "I have never ceased to love thee!"

III. **Is a love of Christ-like sacrifice.**—"As Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us" (ver. 2). The offering of Christ as a sacrifice for the sins of men was acceptable to God, and came up before Him as a sweet-smelling savour, because it was the offering and sacrifice of love. The life of love is the life of obedience; it is eager to serve, and it shrinks not from suffering. Nothing can be love to God which does not shape itself into obedience. We remember the anecdote of the Roman commander who forbade an engagement with the enemy, and the first transgressor against whose prohibition was his own son. He accepted the challenge of the leader of the other host, met, slew, spoiled him, and then with triumphant feeling carried the spoils to his father's tent. But the Roman father refused to recognise the instinct which prompted this as deserving of the name of love. Disobedience contradicted it and deserved death. Weak sentiment—what was it worth? It was the dictate of ambition and self-will overriding obedience and discipline; it was not love. A self-sacrificing life is prompted, sustained, and ennobled by love. The trials which love cheerfully undergoes in its ministry of love to others and in obedience to the will of God are often transformed into blessings. There is a legend that Nimrod took Abraham and cast him into a furnace of fire because he would not worship idols; but God changed the coals into a bed of roses. So it will ever be. The obedience that leads to the furnace of fire will find in the end that it is a bed of roses. The life of loving sacrifice will issue in eternal blessedness.

Lessons.—*The life of love is*—1. *The highest life.* 2. *The happiest life.* 3. *The life most fruitful in usefulness to others.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1, 2. *St. Paul's Doctrine of Christian Ethics.*

I. **The fundamental truth of the Fatherhood of God.**—Man's life has its law, for it has its source in the nature of the Eternal. Behind our race instincts and the laws imposed on us in the long struggle for existence, behind those imperatives of practical reason involved in the structure of our intelligence, is the presence and active will of Almighty God our heavenly Father.

Intuitional morals bear witness to the God of creation, experimental morals to the God of providence and history. The divine Fatherhood is the keystone of the arch in which they meet. The command to be imitators of God makes *personality* the sovereign element in life. If consciousness is a finite and passing phenomenon, if God be but a name for the sum of the impersonal laws that regulate the universe, for the "stream of tendency" in the worlds, *Father* and *love* are meaningless terms applied to the Supreme, and religion dissolves into an impalpable mist. Love, thought, will in us raise our being above the realm of the impersonal; and these faculties point us upward to Him from whom they came, the Father of the spirits of all flesh. It is not the loss of strength for human service nor the dying out of joy which unbelief entails that is its chief calamity. The sun in the soul's heaven is put out. The personal relationship to the Supreme which gave dignity and worth to our individual being, which imparted sacredness and enduring power to all other ties, is destroyed. The heart is orphaned, the temple of the Spirit desolate. The mainspring of life is broken.

II. **The solidarity of mankind in Christ** furnishes the apostle with a powerful lever for raising the ethical standard of his readers. The thought that we are "members one of another" forbids deceit. Self is so merged in the community that in dealing censure or forgiveness to an offending brother the Christian man feels as though he were dealing with himself—as though it were the hand that forgave the foot for tripping, or the ear that pardoned some blunder of the eye. The Christ loved and gave; for love that does not give, that prompts to no effort and puts itself to no sacrifice, is but a luxury of the heart—useless and even selfish. The Church is the centre of humanity. The love born and nourished in the household of faith goes out into the world with a universal mission. The solidarity of moral interests that is realised there embraces all the kindreds of the earth. The incarnation of Christ knits all flesh into one redeemed family. The continents and races of mankind are members one of another, with Jesus Christ for Head.

III. **Another ruling idea lying at the basis of Christian ethics is St. Paul's conception of man's future destiny.**—There is disclosed a world beyond the world, a life growing out of life, an eternal and invisible kingdom of whose possession the Spirit that lives in Christian men is the earnest and first-fruits. Human reason had guessed and hope had dreamed of the soul's immortality. Christianity gives this hope certainty, and adds to it the assurance of the resurrection of the body. Man's entire nature is thus redeemed. Our bodily dress is one with the spirit that it unfolds. We shall lay it aside only to resume it—transfigured, but with a form and impress continuous with its present being.

IV. **The atonement of the cross stamps its own character and spirit on the entire ethics of Christianity.**—The Fatherhood of God, the unity and solidarity of mankind, the issues of eternal life or death awaiting us in the unseen world—all the great factors and fundamentals of revealed religion gather about the cross of Christ; they lend to it their august significance, and gain from it new import and impressiveness. The fact that Christ "gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God" throws an awful light upon the nature of human transgression. All that inspired men had taught, that good men had believed and felt, and penitent men confessed in regard to the evil of human sin, is more than verified by the sacrifice which the Holy One of God has undergone in order to put it away. What tears of contrition, what cleansing fires of hate against our own sins, what scorn of their baseness, what stern resolves against them, are awakened by the sight of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! The sacrifice of Christ demands from us devotion to Christ Himself. Our first duty as

Christians is to love Christ, to serve and follow Christ. There is no conflict between the claims of Christ and those of philanthropy, between the needs of His worship and the needs of the destitute and suffering in our streets. Every new subject won to the kingdom of Christ is another helper won for His poor. Every act of love rendered to Him deepens the channel of sympathy by which relief and blessing come to sorrowful humanity.—*Findlay.*

Christ's Sacrifice of Himself explained, and Man's Duty to offer Spiritual Sacrifice inferred and recommended.

I. **Our Lord's unexampled sacrifice.**—1. *The priest.* As a prophet or an apostle properly is an ambassador from God to treat with men, so a priest is an agent or solicitor in behalf of men to treat with God.

2. *The sacrifice.*—Our Lord was both offering and sacrifice. Every sacrifice is an offering to God, but every offering to God is not a sacrifice. Perfect innocence and consummate virtue, both in doing and suffering, were not only the flower and perfection but the very form and essence of our Lord's sacrifice. These were the sacrifice of sweet odour, acceptable to Him who alone could judge perfectly of the infinite worth and merit of it.

3. *The altar.*—From the third century to this time the cross whereon our Lord suffered has been called the altar. There is another altar, a spiritual altar—the eternal Spirit, the divine nature of our Lord. The sacrifice of our Lord is an undoubted Scripture truth; but as to a proper altar for that sacrifice, it is a more disputable point, about which wise and good men may be allowed to judge as they see cause.

4. *The divine Lawgiver.*—To whom the sacrifice was made, and by whom it was graciously accepted. God the Father is Lawgiver-in-chief, and to Him our Lord paid the price of our redemption. Thus the glory of God and the felicity of man are both served in this dispensation.

II. **Our own sacrifice of ourselves.**—As Christ gave Himself for us, so we ought to give up ourselves to God in all holy obedience, and particularly in the offices of love towards our brethren, as these are the most acceptable sacrifices we can offer to God. We cannot do greater honour to our Lord's sacrifice than by thus copying it in the best manner we are able—a sacrifice of love to God and love to our neighbours.—*Waterland.*

The Imitation of God.—No argument is so frequently urged as the example of Christ to persuade us to mutual love, because none is so well adapted to influence the mind of a Christian. God's approbation of Christian charity is expressed in the same terms as His acceptance of the sacrifice of Christ; for charity to our fellow-Christians, flowing from a sense of Christ's dying love, is a virtue of distinguished excellence. As the death of Christ is called "a sacrifice for a sweet-smelling savour," so Christian charity is called "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." Let it be our care to follow Christ in His goodness and love, and to learn of Him humility, condescension, mercy, and forgiveness. Religion is an imitation of the moral character of God, brought down to human view and familiarised to human apprehension in the life of Christ. The sacrifice of Christ is of great use, not only as an atonement for guilt, but also as an example of love.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 1. *The Duty and Object of a Christian's Imitation.*

I. **The duty enjoined.**—1. Remove the hindrances to imitation. (1) Spiritual pride and self-conceit. (2) This self-conceit works in us a prejudiced opinion, and makes us undervalue and detract from the worth of our brother. (3) Spiritual drowsiness. 2. Observe the rules of imitation. (1) We must not take our pattern upon trust; no, not St. Paul himself. He brings it in indeed as a duty—"Be ye followers of me"; but he adds this direction, "as I am of

Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 1). "For in imitation, besides the persons, there is also to be considered," saith Quintilian, "what it is we must imitate in the persons. We must no further follow them than they follow the rules of art." "Some there were," said Seneca, "who imitated nothing but that which was bad in the best." It is so in our Christian profession: we must view, and try, and understand what we are to imitate. We must not make use of all eyes, but of those only which look upon the Lord. (2) That we strive to imitate the best. Saith Pliny: "It is great folly not to propose always the best pattern"; and saith Seneca, "Choose a Cato," a prime, eminent man, by whose authority thy secret thoughts may be more holy, the very memory of whom may compose thy manners; whom not only to see, but to think of, will be a help to the reformation of thy life. Dost thou live with any in whom the good gifts and graces of God are shining and resplendent, who are strict and exact, and so retain the precepts of God in memory that they forget them not in their works? Give me the instructive examples of these good men; let them always be before my eyes; let them be a second rule by which I may correct my life and manners; let me not lose this help, which God hath granted me, of imitation.

II. **The object of imitation.**—We must make God the rule of goodness in all our actions: we must be just, to observe the law; valiant, to keep down our passions; temperate, to conform our wills to the rule of reason; and wise, to our salvation. But there is no virtue which makes us more resemble God than this which the apostle here exhorts the Ephesians to; and that is mercy. For although all virtues are in the highest degree, nay, above all degrees, most perfect in Him; yet, in respect of His creatures, none is so resplendent as mercy. Mercy is the queen and empress of God's virtues; it is the bond and knot which unites heaven and earth, that by which we hold all our titles—our title to be men, our title to the name of Christian, our title to the profession of Christianity, our title to earth, our title to heaven. 1. As God forgiveth us, so we must forgive our enemies. 2. As we must forgive, so God's mercy must be the motive: we must do it "out of a desire to imitate God." 3. We must conform our imitation to the Pattern. He with one act of mercy wipes out all scores; so must we. When He forgives our sins, He is said to cast them behind Him, never to think of them, so to forget them as if they never had been; so must we. He doth it too without respect of persons; and so we ought to do. We must forgive all, for ever; and so far must we be from respect of persons that we must acknowledge no title but that of Christian.—*Farindon.*

Likeness to God.

I. **Likeness to God belongs to man's higher or spiritual nature.**—It has its foundation in the original and essential capacities of the mind. In proportion as these are unfolded by right and vigorous exertion, it is extended and brightened. In proportion as these lie dormant it is obscured. Likeness to God is the supreme gift. He can communicate nothing so precious, glorious, blessed as Himself. To hold intellectual and moral affinity with the supreme Being, to partake His Spirit, to be His children by derivations of kindred excellence, to bear a growing conformity to the perfection which we adore—this is a felicity which obscures and annihilates all other good. It is only in proportion to this likeness that we can enjoy either God or the universe. To understand a great and good being we must have the seeds of the same excellence.

II. **That man has a kindred nature with God,** and may bear most important and ennobling relations to Him, seems to me to be established by a striking proof. Whence do we derive our knowledge of the attributes and perfections which constitute the supreme

Being? I answer, We derive them from our own souls. The divine attributes are first developed in ourselves, and thence transferred to our Creator. The idea of God, sublime and awful as it is, is the idea of our own spiritual nature, purified and enlarged to infinity. It is the resemblance of a parent to a child, the likeness of a kindred nature.

III. **God is made known to us as a Father.**—And what is it to be a father? It is to communicate one's own nature, to give life to kindred beings; and the highest function of a father is to educate the mind of the child, and to impart to it what is noblest and happiest in his own mind. God is our Father, not merely because He created us, or because He gives us enjoyment; for He created the flower and the insect, yet we call Him not their Father. This bond is a spiritual one. This name belongs to God, because He frames spirits like Himself, and delights to give them what is most glorious and blessed in His own nature. Accordingly Christianity is said with special propriety to reveal God as the Father, because it reveals Him as sending His Son to cleanse the mind from every stain, and to replenish it for ever with the spirit and moral attributes of its Author.

IV. **The promise of the Holy Spirit** is among the most precious aids of influences which God imparts. It is a divine assistance adapted to our moral freedom, an aid which silently mingles and conspires with all other helps and means of goodness, and by which we are strengthened to understand and apply the resources derived from our munificent Creator. This aid we cannot prize too much, or pray for too earnestly.—*Channing.*

Ver. 2. "And walk in love." *The Nature, Properties, and Acts of Charity.*

I. **The nature of charity.**—1. Loving our neighbour implies we value and esteem him. 2. Implies a sincere and earnest desire for his welfare and good of all kinds in due proportion. 3. A complacence or delightful satisfaction in the good of our neighbour. 4. Condolence and commiseration in the evils befalling him.

II. **Properties of charity.**—1. Love appropriates its object in apprehension and affection, embracing it, possessing and enjoying it as its own. 2. It desires reciprocal affection. 3. Disposes to please our neighbour, not only by inoffensive but by an obliging demeanour. 4. Makes a man deny himself—despising all selfish regards—for the benefit of his neighbour. 5. To be condescending and willing to perform the meanest offices needful or useful to his friend.

III. **Acts of charity.**—1. To forbear anger on provocation. 2. To remit offences, suppressing revenge. 3. To maintain concord and peace. 4. To be candid in opinion and mild in censure. 5. Abstain from doing anything which may occasion our neighbour to commit sin, or disaffect him towards religion, or discourage him in the practice of duty.—*Barrow.*

The Sacrifice of Christ.

I. **A divine person was absolutely necessary.**—1. *He who atones must be in possession of infinite worth.* Nothing less than the glory of infinity and eternity can atone for transgression. The individual must also be possessed of humanity for this obvious reason: that man hath transgressed, and man must atone. In the person of the Messiah we behold everything God could possibly desire. A divine person, comprising Deity and humanity in himself, atones for sin.

2. *It was absolutely necessary that the individual who atoned should be wholly at his own disposal.*—Now, no finite being is at his own disposal; no finite being can say, I will do as I please; but Messiah speaks of Himself in language that finite being could not adopt without insulting God. The doctrine of the Trinity is opposed; but when we peruse Scripture we shall find the absolute necessity of a plurality of

persons. A divine person to present a sacrifice; and if so, a divine person to receive that sacrifice.

II. **Christ's love in giving Himself.**—And here we behold the love of God in all its glory. Christ hath saved us, and given Himself for us. Here we behold the love of Christ; the love of a divine person embracing God, embracing the law of God, and embracing the sinner in all his shame. Two of the attributes of this love never unfolded their glories before. The intenseness and the holiness of it were never before manifested. Behold God as well as man, a divine person suffering for us. Here for once, and once only, behold the sovereignty of God in all its glory, in all its lowliness, connected with the justice of God in all its terrors. Messiah is punished, that the transgressor may live for ever.

III. **God's pleasure in the sacrifice of His Son.**—1. *God is infinitely delighted with His Son*, as He is one in essence with Him. The pious Baptist gives his disciples a volume of divinity in a few words. He traces everything to its source. "The Father loveth the Son." Surely, then, we must anticipate God's pleasure in everything the Saviour does. 2. *The resurrection and ascension of Christ* prove God's acceptance of the sacrifice. 3. *The success of the gospel another proof.*

Lessons.—1. *See the evil and danger of unbelief.* 2. *All spiritual good comes from God; all spiritual evil flows from the creature.* 3. *Learn the work of faith—to accept Christ.*—*Howels.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 3—14.

The Children of Darkness and of Light.

I. **The children of darkness are known by their deeds** (vers. 3-5).—A loathsome and unsightly list! Sin marks its victims. Deeds done in darkness do not escape detection and exposure. The revolting sins of the heathen reveal the depth of wickedness to which man may sink when he abandons God and is abandoned of God. Every single sin, voluntarily indulged, weakens the power of self-control, and there is no deed of darkness a reckless sinner may not commit. Sensuality is a devil-fish—a vampire of the sea—preying upon and devouring the best powers of mind and body.

1. *Their deeds exclude them from the inheritance of the good.*—They have no "inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God" (ver. 5). The children of darkness can have no company and no place with the children of light; the two cannot co-exist or blend together. The sinner excludes himself, and unfits himself for fellowship with the good. Their purity is a constant reproof of his vileness; he shrinks from their society, and hates them because they are so good. We may well be on our guard against sins that shut us out of the kingdom of grace on earth, and out of heaven hereafter.

2. *Their deeds expose them to the divine wrath.*—"Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience" (ver. 6). The wrath of God is already upon them (Rom. i. 18), and shall remain so long as they are disobedient. Deeds such as theirs carry their own punishment; but there is also the righteous vengeance of God to reckon with. For sin God can have nothing but wrath; but yet that is mercifully restrained to afford every opportunity for repentance. The Roman magistrates, when they gave sentence upon any one to be scourged, had a bundle of rods tied hard with many knots laid before them. The reason was this: whilst the beadle was untying the knots, which he was to do by order and not in any other or sudden way, the magistrates might see the deportment and carriage of the delinquent, whether he was sorry for his fault and showed any hope of amendment, that then they might recall his sentence or mitigate his punishment; otherwise he was corrected so much the

more severely. Thus God in the punishment of sinners. How patient is He! How loth to strike! How slow to anger!

II. **The children of light are divinely illumined.**—1. *They were once in darkness.* "Ye were sometimes darkness" (ver. 8). Their present condition as children of the light should remind them by contrast of their former state, and should excite their gratitude to God for the change He had wrought in them. They were not to be deceived by specious arguments (ver. 6) that they could return to their old sins and yet retain their new inheritance. To go back to the old life is to go back to darkness.

2. *Their possession of divine light is evident.*—"But now are ye light in the Lord. . . . For the fruit of the Spirit [*the fruit of light*] is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (vers. 8, 9). True virtue is of the light and cannot be hid. Genuine religion manifests itself in goodness of heart, in righteousness of life, and in truthfulness of character and speech—in a holy reality that is both experienced and expressed. On Herder's grave at Weimar there was placed by royal authority a cast-iron tablet with the words, "Light, Love, Life." The life illumined by the Spirit is its own bright witness.

3. *Their conduct aims at discovering what is acceptable to God.*—"Walk as children of the light, . . . proving what is acceptable unto the Lord" (vers. 8, 10). Their outward life must be in harmony with the new nature they have received. They were adopted as children of the light, and they must think, speak, and act in the light and with the light they had received. The light will show what it is that God approves; and striving in all things to please Him our light will increase. We may sometimes be mistaken, but we shall get light from our mistakes, as well as from our success, as to the will of God. Life is a trial, and our conduct will be the test as to how we are using the light God has given us. The light we shed will be a help and guide to others. There is a kind of diamond which, if exposed for some minutes to the light of the sun and then taken into a dark room, will emit light for some time. The marvellous property of retaining light and thereby becoming the source of light on a small scale shows how analogous to light its very nature must be. Those who touched the Saviour became sources of virtue to others. As Moses' face shone when he came from the mount, so converse with spiritual things makes Christians the light which shines in the dark places of the earth. "Let your light so shine before men."

III. **The children of light cannot participate in deeds of darkness.**—1. *They are to shun them.* "Be not ye partakers with them . . . Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness" (vers. 7, 11). We may not actually commit certain sins; but if we tolerate or encourage them, we are partakers with the transgressors. The safest place is that which is farthest from evil. It is a perilous experiment to try how near we can approach and how far dally with sin without committing ourselves. The easiest way to resist temptation is to run away. It is beneath the dignity of the children of light to patronise or trifle with sin.

2. *They are not even to speak of them.*—"It is a shame even to speak of those things" (ver. 12). There are some subjects about which silence is not only the highest prudence but a sacred duty. The foolish talking and jesting of ver. 4 belonged to the period when they were the children of darkness. Sparkling humour refreshes; the ribald jest pollutes. The best way to forget sayings that suggest evil is never to speak of them.

3. *They are to expose them by bringing the light of truth to bear upon them.*—"But rather reprove them. . . . All things that are reproved are made manifest by the light," etc. (vers. 11, 13, 14). Silent absence or abstinence is not enough. Where sin is open to rebuke it should at all hazards be rebuked. On the other hand, St. Paul does not warrant Christians in prying into the hidden sins of the

world around them and playing the moral detective. Publicity is not a remedy for all evils, but a great aggravation of some, and the surest means of disseminating them. It is a shame—a disgrace to our common nature, and a grievous peril to the young and innocent—to fill the public prints with the nauseous details of crime, and to taint the air with its putridities. The fruit of the light convicts the unfruitful works of darkness. The light of the gospel disclosed and then dispelled the darkness of the former time. So will it be with the night of sin that is spread over the world. The light which shines upon sin-laden and sorrowful hearts shines on them to change them into its own nature. The manifested is light; in other words, if men can be made to see the true nature of their sin, they will forsake it. If the light can but penetrate their conscience, it will save them. "Wherefore He saith, Awake thou that sleepest." With this song on her lips the Church went forth, clad in the armour of light, strong in the joy of salvation; and darkness and the works of darkness fled before her (*Findlay*).

Lessons.—*The children of darkness and of light differ*—1. *In their conduct.* 2. *In their spirit and aims.* 3. *In the way in which they are divinely regarded.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 3-6. *Christian Sobriety inculcated.*

I. **The vices condemned.**—1. *Impurity.* Fornication is sometimes used in Scripture to comprehend the grosser forms of uncleanness, as incest, adultery, and prostitution; but in common speech it is appropriated to intimacy between unmarried persons. If acts of uncleanness are criminal, so are impure thoughts and desires. The gospel forbids filthy communication, which indicates a vicious disposition and corrupts others. Christians must abstain from everything that tends to suggest wanton ideas, to excite impure desire, and to strengthen the power of temptation.

2. *Covetousness.* — An immoderate desire of riches.

3. *Foolish talking and jesting.*—The gospel is not so rigid and austere as to debar us from innocent pleasures and harmless amusements. Jesting is not foolish when used to expose the absurdity of error and the folly of vice. The apostle condemns lewd and obscene jesting, profane jesting, and reviling and defamatory jesting. Evil-speaking never wounds so deeply nor infuses in the wound such fatal poison as when it is sharpened by wit and urged home by ridicule.

II. **The arguments subjoined.**—1. Impurity, covetousness, and foolish talking are unbecoming in saints. 2. Foolish talking and jesting are not convenient, as the heathen imagined them to be, but are criminal in their nature and fatal in their tendency. 3. The indulgence of these sins is inconsistent with a title to heaven. 4. These sins not only exclude from heaven, but bring upon the sinners the wrath of God.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 4. *Against Foolish Talking and jesting.*

I. **In what foolish talking and jesting may be allowed.**—1. Facetiousness is not unreasonable which ministers harmless delight to conversation. 2. When it exposes things base and evil. 3. When it is a defence against unjust reproach. 4. When it may be used so as not to defile the mind of the speaker or do wrong to the hearer.

II. **In what it should be condemned.**—1. All profane jesting or speaking loosely about holy things. 2. Abusive and scurrilous jesting which tends to damage our neighbour. 3. It is very culpable to be facetious in obscene and smutty matters. 4. To affect to value this way of speaking in comparison

to the serious and plain way of speaking. 5. All vainglorious ostentation. 6. When it impairs the habitual seriousness that becomes the Christian.—*Barrow.*

Ver. 6. *The Dissipation of Large Cities.*

I. **The origin of a life of dissipation.**—Young men on their entrance into the business of the world have not been enough fortified against its seducing influences by their previous education at home. Ye parents who, in placing your children on some road to gainful employment, have placed them without a sigh in the midst of depravity, so near and so surrounding that without a miracle they must perish, you have done an act of idolatry to the god of this world, you have commanded your household after you to worship him as the great divinity of their lives, and you have caused your children to make their approaches to his presence, and in so doing to pass through the fire of such temptations as have destroyed them.

II. **The progress of a life of dissipation.**—The vast majority of our young, on their way to manhood, are initiated into all the practices and describe the full career of dissipation. Those who have imbibed from their fathers the spirit of this world's morality are not sensibly arrested in this career, either by the opposition of their friends or by the voice of their own conscience. Those who have imbibed an opposite spirit, and have brought it into competition with an evil world, and have at length yielded with many a sigh and many a struggle, are troubled with the upbraidings of conscience. The youthful votary of pleasure determines to be more guarded; but the entanglements of companionship have got hold of him, the inveteracy of habit tyrannises over all his purposes, the stated opportunity again comes round, and the loud laugh of his partners chases all his despondency away. The infatuation gathers upon him every month, a hardening process goes on, the deceitfulness of sin grows apace, and he at length becomes one of the sturdiest and most unrelenting of her votaries. He in his turn strengthens the conspiracy that is formed against the morals of a new generation, and all the ingenuous delicacies of other days are obliterated. He contracts a temperament of knowing, hackneyed, unfeeling depravity, and thus the mischief is transmitted from one year to another, and keeps up the guilty history of every place of crowded population.

III. **The effects of a life of dissipation.**—We speak not at present of the coming death and of the coming judgment, but of the change which takes place on many a votary of licentiousness when he becomes what the world calls a reformed man. He bids adieu to the pursuits and profligacies of youth, not because he has repented of them, but because he has outlived them. It is a common and easy transition to pass from one kind of disobedience to another; but it is not so easy to give up that rebelliousness of heart which lies at the root of all disobedience. The man has withdrawn from the scenes of dissipation, and has betaken himself to another way; but it is his own way. He may bid adieu to profligacy in his own person, but he lifts up the light of his countenance on the profligacy of others. He gives it the whole weight and authority of his connivance. Oh for an arm of strength to demolish this firm and far-spread compact of iniquity, and for the power of some such piercing and prophetic voice as might convince our reformed men of the baleful influence they cast behind them on the morals of the succeeding generation! What is the likeliest way of setting up a barrier against this desolating torrent of corruption? The mischief will never be combatted effectually by any expedient separate from the growth and the transmission of personal Christianity throughout the land.—*T. Chalmers.*

Vers. 7-12. *Fellowship in Wickedness and its Condemnation.*

I. **Illustrate this fellowship in**

wickedness.—1. Not to oppose, in many cases, is to embolden transgressors, and to be partakers with them. 2. We have more direct fellowship with the wicked when we encourage them by our example. 3. They who incite and provoke others to evil works have fellowship with them. 4. They who explicitly consent to and actually join with sinners in their evil works have fellowship with them. 5. To comfort and uphold sinners in their wickedness is to have fellowship with them. 6. There are some who rejoice in iniquity when they have lent no hand to accomplish it.

II. **Apply the arguments the apostle urges against it.**—1. One argument is taken from the superior light which Christians enjoy. 2. Another is taken from the grace of the Holy Spirit, of which believers are the subjects. 3. The works of darkness are unfruitful. 4. This is a shameful fellowship. 5. If we have fellowship with sinners in their works, we must share with them in their punishment.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 8. *Light in Darkness.*—I was in a darkened room that I might observe the effect produced by the use of what is called luminous paint. A neat card on which the words "Trust in the Lord" were printed rested upon the bookcase and shone out clearly in the darkness. The effect startled me. How remarkable that if from any cause the light of sun or day failed to rest upon the card its luminousness gradually declined, but returned when the sun's action infused fresh light! Truly we also, if hidden from the face of our Lord, cease to shine. "Are ye light in the Lord? walk as children of light."—*H. Varley.*

Ver. 9. *Fruit of the Spirit.*—As oftentimes when walking in a wood near sunset, though the sun himself be hid by the height and bushiness of the trees around, yet we know that he is still above the horizon from seeing his beams in the open glades before us illuminating a thousand leaves, the several brightnesses of which are so many evidences of his presence. Thus it is with the Holy Spirit: He works in secret, but His work is manifest in the lives of all true Christians. Lamps so heavenly must have been lit from on high.—*J. C. Hare.*

Ver. 10. *The Rule of Christian Conduct.*—1. We cannot conform ourselves to what is acceptable to the Lord and walk as children of light except we make serious search into the rule of duty revealed in the word and do our utmost to come up to that rule. We walk not acceptably when we do things rashly without deliberation, or doubtingly after deliberation, nor when the thing done is in itself right, but we do it not from that ground, but to gratify ourselves. 2. It is not sufficient to make this inquiry in order to some few and weighty actions, but in order to all, whether greater or less, whether advantage or loss may follow our conforming to the rule. 3. The finding out of what is acceptable to the Lord, especially in some intricate cases, is not easily attained. There must be an accurate search, together with an exercising ourselves in those things we already know to be acceptable, that so we may experimentally know them to be such, and get our knowledge bettered in those things of which we are ignorant. —*Fergusson.*

Vers. 11, 12. *Works of Darkness.*—1. Though we are not in all cases to abstain from the fellowship of wicked men, but may converse with them as we are bound by necessity, or by any civil, religious, or natural bond, yet no tie of that kind can warrant us to partake with them in their sins. 2. Though the command to reprove the sins of others is an affirmative precept, and not binding at all times and in all cases, yet not reproving when occasion offers is a partaking with them in their sins. 3. There should be such a holy bashfulness in Christians as to think shame to utter

in speech, at least without detestation, those things godless sinners are not ashamed to practise. Ministers in their public preachings should be modest and sparing in deciphering filthy sins, lest they teach others how to commit the sin they reprove. 4. When men do not seek the veil of secrecy to cover their sins, but glory in their shame, they are more corrupt than the grossest of pagans.—*Fergusson.*

Vers. 13, 14. *Slumbering Souls and their Awakening.*

I. **The character of the persons addressed.**—They are in a state of sleep. 1. If you allow yourselves in the practice of known wickedness, your conscience is asleep. 2. If you live in the customary neglect of self-examination, you are in a state of slumber. 3. If you have never been in any degree affected with a sense of your guilt and your dependence on the mercy of God in Christ, you are among those who are asleep. 4. If you have no conflicts with sin and temptation, you are in a state of slumber. 5. The prevalence of a sensual and carnal disposition is a sign of spiritual death. 6. Stupidity under the warnings of God's word and providence indicates such a state of soul as the Scripture compares to sleep. 7. The soul in which the temper of the gospel is formed hungers and thirsts after righteousness, desires spiritual growth, and reaches after perfection.

II. **The awakening call.**—1. This awakening must suppose and imply a conviction of your sin and a sense of your danger. 2. This awaking from sleep and arising from the dead imply a real repentance of sin and turning to God. 3. They who have awoke from their sleep and risen from the dead will experience the properties and maintain the exercises of a holy and spiritual life.

III. **The encouragement to attend to the awakening call.**—"Christ shall give thee light." 1. This may be understood as a promise of pardon and eternal life on your repentance. 2. The words import God's gracious attention to awakened souls when they frame their doings to turn to Him.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 13. *The Light of God.*

I. **Light comes from God.**—God is light, and He wishes to give light to His children. "Whatsoever doth make manifest is light"—that which is made manifest is light. There has been a steady progress in the mind of the Christian race, and this progress has been in the direction of light. Has it not been so in our notions of God?—a gradual discovery that when God is manifested, behold, God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all—a gradual vindication of His character from those dark and horrid notions of the Deity which were borrowed from the pagans and the Jewish rabbis—a gradual return to the perfect good news of a good God which was preached by St. John and by St. Paul. The day shall come when all shall be light in the Lord—when all mankind shall know God from the least unto the greatest, and, lifting up free foreheads to Him who made them and redeemed them by His Son, shall in spirit and in truth worship the Father.

II. **In the case of our fellow-men whatsoever is made manifest is light.**—How easy it was to have dark thoughts about our fellow-men simply because we did not know them,—easy to condemn the negro to perpetual slavery, when we knew nothing of him but his black face; or to hang by hundreds the ragged street boys, while we disdained to inquire into the circumstances which had degraded them; or to treat madmen as wild beasts, instead of taming them by wise and gentle sympathy. But with a closer knowledge of our fellow-creatures has come toleration, pity, sympathy. Man, in proportion as he becomes manifest to man, is seen, in spite of all defects and sins, to be hallowed with a light from God who made him.

III. **It has been equally so in the case of the physical world.**—Nature, being made manifest, is light. Science

has taught men to admire where they used to dread, to rule where they used to obey, to employ for harmless uses what they were once afraid to touch, and where they once saw only fiends to see the orderly and beneficent laws of the All-good and Almighty God. Everywhere, as the work of nature is unfolded to our eyes, we see beauty, order, mutual use, the offspring of perfect love as well as perfect wisdom. Let us teach these things to our children. Tell them to go to the light and see their heavenly Father's works manifested, and know that they are, as He is, Light.—*C. Kingsley.*

Ver. 14. *Moral Stupidity.* — How many scarcely think of God from day to day! It cannot therefore be uncharitable to consider the mass of the people, compared with the wakefulness their infinite interests require, as sunk in a profound slumber. Unless this slumber is soon broken they must sleep the sleep of eternal death.

I. **Search for the cause of this stupidity.**—The proximate cause may be comprehended in these two words—ignorance and unbelief. The remote cause is opposition to God and truth. Were not the heart opposed, no man with the Bible in his hand could remain ignorant of truths which claim to have so important a bearing on his eternal destiny. Fortified by sevenfold ignorance, men can no more be awakened to contemplate their condition with alarm than the pagans of the wilderness. It is perfectly in character for them to slumber. But there are men who are respectable for their knowledge of Christian truth who yet are asleep. The cause with them is unbelief—the want of a realising sense. Their understanding assents to the awful verities of religion, but they do not realisingly believe them.

II. **Apply some arguments to remove the evil.**—Consider that these awful truths are as much realities as though you were now overwhelmed with a sense of their importance. Neither the ignorance nor the unbelief of man can change eternal truth. God is as holy, as awful in majesty, He is as much your Creator, Preserver, and Master, He as much holds your destinies in His hands, as though you were now lying at His feet beseeching Him not to cast you down to hell. What would it avail if all the people should disbelieve that the sun will ever rise again, or that spring-time and harvest will ever return? Can the soldier annihilate the enemy by marching up to the battery with his eyes and ears closed? You have the same means with others: why should you remain ignorant while they are informed? If your knowledge is competent and it is unbelief that excludes conviction, then call into action the powers of a rational soul and cast yourselves for help on God. If you ever mean to awake, awake now. The longer you sleep the sounder you sleep. The longer you live without religion the less likely that you will ever possess it. You are sleeping in the presence of an offended God. In His hands you lie, and if He but turn them you slide to rise no more.—*E. D. Griffin.*

The Call of the Gospel to Sinners.

I. **The state in which the gospel finds mankind.**—A state of sleep and of death.

1. *It is a state of insensibility and unconcern with respect to the concerns of another world.*—Busied about trifles, men overlook the great concerns of eternity. Having their minds darkened, they see no world but the present, they live as if they were to live here for ever. And if at any time this false peace is shaken, they try all means to prevent it from being destroyed, and to lull themselves again to rest.

2. *How indisposed and unwilling men are to set about the work of true religion.*—Nothing but this religion of which men are so ignorant, about which they care so little, against which they have conceived such a dislike, can in the end deliver them from everlasting shame, sorrow, and punishment. Here is their extreme misery and danger. They are

unconcerned about an object which of all others ought to concern them most, and are set against the only remedy which can be of any real service to them. They are every moment liable to fall into utter perdition; but they are not aware of their danger, and reject the only hand which is stretched out to save them.

II. **The duty the gospel calls on them to discharge.**—To awake out of sleep and arise from the dead. 1. *Their duty is to consider their state and danger.* 2. *To break off their sins by repentance.* 3. *To seek the knowledge and favour of God.*

III. **The encouragement the gospel affords.**—1. *Christ will give thee knowledge.* He will enlighten thy darkened mind, He will teach thee by His good Spirit, and will effectually lead thee into all saving truth.

2. *Christ will give thee peace.*—Whatever peace thou mayest have arising from not knowing and not feeling that thou art a sinner and daily exposed to the wrath of God, the peace which Christ offers thee is a peace which will arise from a consciousness that thy sins are forgiven, and that, although thou art a sinner, thou art yet reconciled to God.

3. *Christ will give thee holiness.*—Holiness is our meetness for heaven. It is that state and disposition of heart which alone can fit us for seeing and serving God.—*E. Cooper.*

A Summons to Spiritual Light.

I. **A lamentable moral condition.**—*Sleep* implies a state of inactivity and security. Men are busily employed about their worldly concerns; but a lamentable supineness prevails with respect to spiritual things. The generality do not apprehend their souls to be in any danger—death, judgment, heaven, and hell do not seem worthy their notice. God's threatenings against them are denounced without effect—they are like Jonah, sleeping in the midst of a storm. *Death* includes the ideas of impotence and corruption. An inanimate body cannot perform any of the functions of life. It has within itself the seeds and the principles of corruption. The soul also, till quickened from the dead, is in a state of impotence, it is incapable of spiritual action or discernment. Yet, notwithstanding this state appears so desperate, we must address to every one that is under it the command, "Awake." Your inactivity and security involve you in the deepest guilt; your corruption of heart and life provokes the majesty of God. Nor is your impotence any excuse for your disobedience. They who exert their feeble powers may expect divine assistance. To convince us that none shall fail who use the appointed means God enforces His command with

II. **A promise.**—Sleep and death are states of intellectual darkness: hence light is promised to those who obey the divine mandate. Light in Scripture imparts knowledge (Isa. viii. 20), holiness (1 John i. 7), comfort (Ps. xcvii. 11), and glory (Col. i. 12). And all these blessings shall they receive from Christ, the fountain of light (Mal. iv. 2; John i. 9).

Lessons.—1. *Let each one consider the command addressed to himself—"Awake thou."* 2. *Let all our powers be called into action.* 3. *In exerting ourselves let us expect the promised aid.*—*Theological Sketch Book.*

The Gospel Call and Promise.

I. **Many of mankind are in a state of deadly sleep.**—In sleep the animal spirits retire to their source, the nerves are collapsed or embraced; and as the nerves are the medium of sensation and motion, the whole system is in a state of insensibility and inactivity. How exactly resembling this is your spiritual state.

1. *You are insensible.*—Your eyes and ears are closed; and you have no proper sense of pleasure or of pain.

2. *You are in a state of security.*—You have no fear of evil, no apprehension of danger, and consequently no concern for your safety.

3. *You are in a state of inactivity.*—

You are not inquiring, labouring, wrestling. When the body is locked in slumber, thought roves at random and produces gay dreams of fancied happiness. Thus many are dreaming their lives away. (1) In this sleep many are as void of sense and motion as if they were actually dead. (2) In common sleep a person after due repose spontaneously awakes, renewed in vigour. But from this sleep, unless God should awake you, you will never awake till the heavens be no more. (3) It is a sleep unto death. Like one who has taken a large quantity of opium, unless you are awakened by some external cause, you will insensibly sink into the second death, the death which never dies.

II. **God is using means to awaken them.**—While you are asleep, light, however bright and clear, shines upon you in vain. Till warning has waked attention, instruction and illumination will be lost upon you. 1. *God calls you to awake* from your dreams of fancied happiness, and reflect upon the vanity of the objects by which you are deluded. 2. *Struggle to shake off the dull slumber* which weighs you down. 3. *Consider your misery and danger.* 4. *Rouse all that is within you to activity.* God calls you—(1) By the language of His law. (2) By the severe dispensations of His providence. (3) By the strivings of His Spirit. (4) By the voice of the gospel.

III. **God will give light to all who awake at His call.**—It is the peculiar property of light to make manifest (ver. 13). Christ will give you light. 1. He shall make manifest to yourself your character and your situation. 2. You shall behold the light of life. 3. He shall reveal to you the God of pardoning love. 4. He shall chase the darkness of sin from your soul, and you shall walk in the light of holiness. 5. He shall put an end to your mourning.

Learn.—1. *The deceitfulness and destructive character of sin.* 2. *How fully God provides for your salvation.* 3. *Hear the voice of God.*—*E. Hare.*

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

Christian Wisdom—

I. **Cautiously regulates the outward life.**—"See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise" (ver. 15). The Christian needs not only spiritual fervour and enthusiasm, but also prudence—sanctified common sense. It is possible to do a right thing in a wrong way, or in such a way as to cause more mischief than benefit. There is a severity of virtue that repels, and rouses resentment; and there is a parade of Christian liberty that shocks the sensitive. The truth lies between two extremes, and Christian wisdom is seen in maintaining the truth and avoiding extremes. "I wisdom dwell with prudence." Mr. Edward Everett Hale is generally credited as the author of the following motto for Christian workers:

"Look up, and not down;
Look out, and not in;
Look forward, and not back;
Lend a hand."

Success in soul-winning is only given to skill, earnestness, sympathy, perseverance, tact. Men are saved, not in masses, but by careful study and well-directed effort. It is said that such is the eccentric flight of the snipe when they rise from the earth that it completely puzzles the sportsman, and some who are capital shots at other birds are utterly baffled here. Eccentricity seems to be their special quality, and this can only be mastered by incessant practice with the gun. But the eccentricity of souls is beyond this, and he had need be a very spiritual Nimrod—a mighty hunter before the Lord—who would capture them for Christ. "He that winneth souls is wise,"

II. **Teaches how to make the best use of present opportunity.**—1. *Observing the value of time amid the prevalence of evil.* "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (ver. 16). Time is a section cut out of the great circle of eternity, and defines for us the limits in which the work of life must be done. It is a precious gift bestowed by the beneficent hand of God—a gift involving grave responsibility; and we must render a strict account of the use we make of every swing of the pendulum. It is doled out to us in minute fragments. One single year is made up of 31,536,000 seconds. Every tick of the clock records the ever-lessening opportunities of life. Time is in perpetual motion. Like a strong, ever-flowing river, it is bearing away everything into the boundless ocean of eternity. We never know the value of time till we know the value of the fragments into which it is broken up. To make the most of a single hour we must make the most of every minute of which it is composed. The most dangerous moments of a man's life are those when time hangs heavily on his hands. He who has nothing to do but kill time is in danger of being killed himself. It is a miracle of divine goodness if he is preserved from serious folly, or something worse; and such miracles rarely occur. The man who has learnt the value of time can learn any lesson this world may have to teach him. Time is the opportunity for the exercise of Christian wisdom, and should be the more sedulously used "when the days are evil"—when evil is in power. Oh for wisdom to number our days, to grasp the meaning of present opportunity! Here come the moments that can never be had again; some few may yet be filled with imperishable good. Let us apply our hearts—all our powers—unto wisdom.

2. *Having the good sense to recognise the divine will.*—"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (ver. 17). We must read and interpret the signs of the times in the light of God's purpose. A close and deep study of the divine mind will reveal to us the significance of the passing opportunity, and aid us in making the wisest use of it. Our biggest schemes are doomed to failure if they are not in accordance with the will of God. The noblest tasks are reserved for those who have the keenest spiritual insight and are most in harmony with the divine purpose.

III. **Avoids the folly and waste of intemperance.**—"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess" (ver. 18). The Asian Christians were a social, light-hearted people, fond of convivial feasts. Wine was their danger; and even in the celebration of the Lord's Supper they ran into excess, and degraded the holy ordinance. There were doubtless converted drunkards among them; and the warning of the text was specially needed. Intemperance is not only a folly and a waste; it is a degradation and a sin. It is the excessive indulgence of a craving that at bottom may be in itself good, if wisely regulated—a craving for an intenser life. "One finds traces," says Monod, "of the primitive greatness of our nature even in its most deplorable errors. Just as impurity proceeds at the bottom from an abuse of the craving for love, so drunkenness betrays a certain demand for ardour and enthusiasm which in itself is natural and even noble. Man loves to feel himself alive; he would fain live twice his life at once; and he would rather draw excitement from horrible things than have no excitement at all." When the physicians told Theotimus that except he abstained from drunkenness and licentiousness he would lose his eyes, his heart was so wedded to his sins that he answered, "Then farewell, sweet light."

IV. **Seeks to be under the complete control of the divine Spirit.**—"But be filled with the Spirit" (ver. 18). The excitement of drunkenness must be supplanted by a holier and more elevating stimulus: the cup that intoxicates exchanged for the new wine of the Spirit. The general adoption of this principle will be the grandest triumph of temperance. The cure of drunkenness will not be accomplished simply by the removal of temptation, unless a relish for higher

things is created and springs of holier pleasure are opened in the hearts of men. A lower impulse is conquered and expelled by the introduction of a higher. Anachonis, the philosopher, being asked by what means a man might best guard against the vice of drunkenness, answered, "By bearing constantly in his view the loathsome, indecent behaviour of such as are intoxicated." Upon this principle was founded the custom of the Lacedæmonians of exposing their drunken slaves to their children, who by that means conceived an early aversion to a vice which makes men appear so monstrous and irrational. There is no excess in drinking copious draughts of the Spirit. Christian wisdom opens the soul to the ever-flowing tide of His influence, and strives to be animated and filled with His all-controlling power.

Lessons.—1. *Wisdom is the best use of knowledge.* 2. *Christianity opens the purest sources of knowledge.* 3. "*Get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding.*"

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 15-17. *Walking circumspectly.*

I. **The duty recommended.**—1. *Walk circumspectly that you may keep within the line of your duty.* Your course often lies in a medium between two extremes. If from this course you deviate, you step into the territory of vice. Be circumspect that you may not mistake your duty. Be watchful that you may retain a sense of virtue and rectitude. Be attentive that you may conform to the Spirit of God's commands.

2. *Walk circumspectly that you may escape the snares in your way.*—Often look forward to descry your dangers. Attend to your particular situation and condition in life. Often review your past life, and reflect on former temptations. Be circumspect that you may detect your enemies when they approach you in disguise. Never neglect your duty under pretence of shunning a temptation.

3. *Walk circumspectly that you may wisely comport with the aspects of Providence.*

4. *Be circumspect that you may do every duty in its time and place.*—Attend on the daily worship of God in your families and closets. Be kind and beneficent to the poor. Neglect not the care of your body. Attend on the instituted ordinances of the gospel.

5. *Walk circumspectly that your good may not be evil spoken of.*

II. **The argument by which the apostle urges the duty.**—"The days are evil." The argument was not peculiar to those early times, but is pertinent to all times. 1. *The days are evil because the Christian finds in himself much disorder and corruption.* 2. *The days are evil as he is exposed to various afflictions.* 3. *There are many adversaries.* 4. *Iniquity abounds.*—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 15. *The Wise Conduct of Life.*—1. The more light and knowledge a man receives from God he ought to take the more diligent heed that in all things he practises according to his light. 2. Those only are most fit to reprove sin in others who walk most circumspectly and live so as they cannot be justly blamed themselves. Even the righteous walking of such is a forcible reproof of sin in others, though they speak nothing. 3. As those are only truly wise in God's account who labour to walk most exactly by the rule of God's word, so where this sanctified wisdom is it will render itself evident by making the person endowed with it walk circumspectly. 4. The less circumspect and exact men be in walking by the rule of God's word the greater fools they are in God's esteem.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 16. *Redeeming the Time.*—To redeem time is to regain what is lost and to save what is left.

I. **Enter on your work speedily.**—Do you ask what is your work? It is time you knew. Consult God's word; that will tell you.

II. **Attend to your work with diligence.**—A sense of past slothfulness must excite you to severer industry. Be not only fervent but steady in your work.

III. **Guard against the things which rob you of your time.**—An indolent habit is inconsistent with laudable actions. A versatile humour is active, but wants patience. An excessive fondness for company and amusement is the cause of much waste of time.

IV. **Do every work in its season.**—Youth is the most promising season. The time of health is more favourable than a time of sickness. There are seasons friendly to particular duties. In doing works of charity observe opportunities.

V. **Wisely divide your time among your various duties.**—*Lathrop.*

The Redemption of Time.

I. **The subject of the exhortation.**—1. *Time sometimes signifies the whole duration assigned to the present world.*

2. *The period of human life.*—The time we occupy in the present state is that which God allots for our personal probation and trial. All God's dispensations in respect to us refer to this period and have their limits fixed by it.

3. *Time means season or opportunity.*—In this sense the apostle uses it here. We are to redeem all the opportunity God bestows on us for getting and doing good, for acquainting ourselves with Him and being at peace.

II. **The duty enjoined on us.**—"Redeeming the time"—the opportunity.

1. *We redeem time by consideration.*

2. *When we turn everything we have to do, in the common concerns of life, into a religious channel.*

3. *By living in a devotional spirit.*—(1) This will cast out everything trifling, much more everything sinful, from our leisure hours. (2) Its preservation and exercise are perfectly compatible with the affairs of life.

4. The principal way by which time is to be redeemed is not merely by making efforts to promote our final blessedness, but *by actually securing our present salvation.*

III. **The motives by which the exhortation is enforced.**—"Because the days are evil."

1. *The days are evil in a general sense.*—This age, as well as the age of the apostles, is a wicked one.

2. *Because they are days of distress.*

3. *The days are evil individually.*—In the sense of affliction to a number of individuals.

4. *It is an evil day that we are ever exposed to enemies and temptations.*

5. *Every day opportunities of improvement are wasted is an evil day.*

6. *The time will come when, as to many unhappy spirits, the opportunity of salvation will be lost for ever.*—*R. Watson.*

The Redemption of Time.—The more the days are beset by things that grievously invade them, disturb them, waste them, the more careful and zealous should we be to save and improve all that we can. To this end—

I. **It is of the highest importance that time should be a reality in our perception and estimate;** that we should verify it as an actual something, like a substance to which we can attach a positive value, and see it as wasting or as improved as palpably as the contents of a granary or as the precious metals. The unfortunate case with us is, that time is apprehended but like air, or rather like empty space, so that in wasting it we do not see that we are destroying or misusing a reality. Time is equivalent to what could be done or gained in it.

II. **Keep established in the mind, and often present to view, certain important purposes or objects that absolutely must be attained.**—For example: that there is some considerable discipline and improvement of the

mind, some attainment of divine knowledge, some measure of the practice of religious exercises, and there is the one thing needful in its whole comprehensive magnitude.

III. **That time be regarded in an inseparable connection with eternity is the grand principle for redeeming it**; to feel solemnly that it is really for eternity, and has all the importance of this sublime and awful relation. It might be a striking and alarming reflection suggested to a man who has wasted his time—now the time has gone backward into the irrevocable past, but the effect of it, from the quality you have given it, is gone forward into eternity, and since you are going thither, how will you meet and feel the effect there?

IV. **Nothing short of the redemption of the soul is the true and effectual redemption of time.**—And this object gives the supreme rule for the redeeming of time. How melancholy to have made so admirable a use of time for all purposes but the supreme one!—*John Foster.*

Vers. 17, 18. *Sensual and Spiritual Excitement.*—There is the antithesis between drunkenness and spiritual fulness. The propriety of this opposition lies in the intensity of feeling produced in both cases. There is one intensity of feeling produced by stimulating the senses, another by vivifying the spiritual life within. The one commences with impulses from without, the other is guarded by forces from within. Here, then, is the similarity and here the dissimilarity which constitutes the propriety of the contrast. One is ruin, the other salvation. One degrades, the other exalts.

I. **The effects are similar.**—On the day of Pentecost, when the first influences of the Spirit descended on the early Church, the effects resembled intoxication. It is this very resemblance which deceives the drunkard; he is led on by his feelings as well as by his imagination. Another point of resemblance is the necessity of intense feeling. We have fulness—it may be produced by outward stimulus or by an inpouring of the Spirit. The proper and natural outlet for this feeling is the life of the Spirit. What is religion but fuller life?

II. **The dissimilarity or contrast in St. Paul's idea.**—The one fulness begins from without, the other from within. The one proceeds from the flesh, and then influences the emotions; the other reverses this order. Stimulants like wine inflame the senses, and through them set the imaginations and feelings on fire; and the law of our spiritual being is, that that which begins with the flesh sensualises the spirit; whereas that which commences in the region of the spirit spiritualises the senses, in which it subsequently stirs emotion. That which begins in the heart ennobles the whole animal being; but that which begins in the inferior departments of our being is the most entire degradation and sensualising of the soul. The other point of difference is one of effect. Fulness of the Spirit calms; fulness produced by excitement satiates and exhausts. The crime of sense is avenged by sense which wears with time—the terrific punishment attached to the habitual indulgence of the senses is that the incitements to enjoyment increase in proportion as the power of enjoyment fades. We want the Spirit of the life of Christ, simple, natural, with power to calm and soothe the feelings which it rouses; the fulness of the Spirit which can never intoxicate!—*F. W. Robertson.*

Christian Mirth versus Drunken Mirth.—Carnal men seek the joys of life in revelry, but Christians must seek them in a higher inspiration—that of the Holy Ghost, whose fulness is the source of the blithest and most joyous life.

I. **The mirth begotten of wine is the mother of all kinds of profligacy.**

II. **The mirth begotten of wine destroys men body and soul.**

III. **The fulness of the Holy Spirit produces a truly blithe and merry life.**—In this life, with its many causes of depression, men need exhilaration, and the text points us to the only place where it is to be found without any alloy.—*G. A. Bennetts, B.A.*

What is your Heart filled with?

I. **The heart of man must be full of something.**

II. **Those who are full of wine cannot be filled with the Spirit.**

III. **Those who are filled with the Spirit will not be full of wine.**

IV. **The joy that is kindled by fulness of wine is degrading while it lasts, and will soon expire.**

V. **The joy that is kindled by the fulness of the Spirit makes us like the angels, and it will never end.**—*Lay Preacher.*

The Vice of Drunkenness.

I. **The nature and extent of the sin.**—The use of meat and drink is to support and comfort the body. Whatever is more than these is excess. The highest degree of intemperance is such an indulgence as suspends the exercise of the mental and bodily powers. If by the indulgence of your appetite you unfit your body for the service of your mind, or your mind for the service of God, so waste your substance as to defraud your family of a maintenance or your creditors of their dues, become enslaved to a sensual habit and fascinated to dissolute company, stupefy your conscience, extinguish the sentiments of honour and banish the thoughts of futurity, you are chargeable with criminal excess.

II. **The guilt and danger which attend the vice.**—1. *It is an ungrateful abuse of God's bounty.* 2 *It divests the man of his native dignity and sinks him below the brutal herds.* 3. *Is injurious to the body as well as mind.* 4. *Consumes men's substance.* 5. *Wastes a man's conscience as well as his substance.* 6. *Intemperance generates other vices—impure lustings, angry passions, profane language, insolent manners, obstinacy of heart, and contempt of reproof.* 7. *Has most lamentable effects on families.* 8. *The Scripture abounds in solemn warnings against this sin.* 9. *This sin must be renounced, or the end of it will be death.—Lathrop.*

Being filled with the Spirit.—1. It supposes a sufficiency and fulness in the Spirit and His influences every way to fill our souls, to supply all our spiritual wants, and to help our infirmities. 2. It imports an actual participation of His influences and fruits in a large and plentiful measure. (1) As men come to have every power and faculty of their souls more subject to the Spirit's authority and under the influence proper to it. (2) As they grow to experience His operations in all the several kinds of them. (3) As His agency comes to be more stated and constant in them. (4) As His grace becomes more mighty and operative in them, so as actually to produce its proper and genuine effects. (5) As they taste such a sweetness and delight in the measure of participation attained that they reach forward with greater ardour toward perfection. 3. That every one should esteem the fulness of the Spirit a desirable thing. (1) It puts us into a fit posture of mind for daily communion with God. (2) Would settle our minds in the truest pleasure and peace. 4. That we should look upon it as an attainable good. (1) From the Spirit's own gracious benignity and His declared inclination to fill our souls. (2) From the purchase and intercession of Christ. (3) From the nature of the Spirit's work in consequence of redemption. (4) From the gospel being described as the ministration of the Spirit. (5) From the declarations of God concerning the Spirit. (6) From the instances of His grace already made in others. (7) From the beginnings of His saving grace in themselves, good men may conclude the greatest heights attainable by them, if they be not wanting to themselves.—*John Evans.*

On being filled with the Spirit—

I. **Implies that the Spirit has been largely given to the Church.**

II. **That as God has given the Spirit largely so He has been abundantly received.**

III. **Is to be possessed by His graces in all their variety.**

IV. **Is to be wholly guided by His influence and subject to His control.**

V. **Is to be the instrument of fulfilling His mission on earth.**

VI. **Is to have God as the only portion of the soul.**—1. The Spirit is God on the earth. 2. To be filled with the Spirit is to be fully occupied with God.—*Stewart.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 19—21.

Spiritual Enjoyment.—

I. **Expressed in heartfelt praise to God.**—"Speaking . . . in spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (ver. 19). Men filled with wine seek their enjoyment in singing bacchanalian odes and songs; but the men of the Spirit find a higher and more satisfying joy in chanting psalms and hymns of praise to God. The holiest excitement seeks expression in music and song. In the praise meetings of the Ephesians we have the beginnings of Christian psalmody. The psalms of the Old Testament were sung, accompanied by musical instruments. "Singing and making melody" means singing and playing, voice and instrument blending in joyous strains of praise. Then would follow hymns expressing the great ideas of the gospel. Regarding the early Christians, Pliny wrote: "They are wont on a fixed day to meet before daylight—to avoid persecution—and to recite a hymn among themselves by turns to Christ, as being God." There might not be much artistic taste in the music, either of voice or instrument; but the sincerity of the heart was the true harmony. The contrast of the verse is between the heathen and the Christian practice. Let your songs be not the drinking songs of heathen feasts, but psalms and hymns; and their accompaniment, not the music of the lyre, but the melody of the heart. Is any merry, let him sing, not light and frivolous songs, breathing questionable morality, but psalms. The glad heart is eager first to acknowledge God.

II. **Largely consists in thanksgiving.**—"Giving thanks always for all things unto God" (ver. 20). God is the active Source of all blessings in creation, providence, and grace, and should be constantly acknowledged in grateful adoration. The thankful heart is the happiest; and it is the happy who sing. Thanksgiving is the predominating element in praise; and praise is the essence of true worship. Prayer is not the essence of worship, though it is an important help. Prayer becomes worship when it merges into praise. The reading and exposition of God's word are not worship. Preaching accomplishes one of its loftiest functions when it incites to praise. Music is not worship; but it may become a valuable accessory. Christianity has taken hold of music and consecrated and elevated it to the highest uses of worship. It has produced the greatest musicians and the grandest music. All true music is the outward and melodious expression of our dearest and most sacred thoughts and feelings. The musical artist touches what is deepest and best in us. Nature has no false notes. When we praise God aright, worship becomes an act of the highest intelligence, calling forth and exercising our noblest powers. We are to sing with the Spirit, and we are to sing with the understanding also. Worship is acceptable to God as it is the joyous expression of the soul, brimming over with thankfulness and reverence. We are then brought under the spiritually transforming power of the Being we worship; the worshipper becomes like the object worshipped.

III. **Soberly recognises the relation in which we stand to each other and to Christ.**—"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (ver. 21). *In the fear of Christ*—so read all the old MSS. and authorities. The believer passes from under the bondage of the law to be the servant of Christ, which through the instinct of love to Him is really to be the Lord's freeman, for he is under the law to Christ. Thus reverential fear of displeasing Him is the motive for discharging our relative duties as Christians. The Church should be a pattern and an example of harmony and peace, and this can only be by the members submitting themselves one to another "in the fear of Christ." The man with the most distinguished gifts must not be above submitting himself to the judgment and will of his fellow-members. Preacher, organist, choir, and congregation must vie with each other in harmonious rivalry in the service and worship of God.

Lessons.—1. *Spiritual enjoyment is not dependent on fictitious excitement.* 2. *Expresses itself in holiest song.* 3. *Is unselfish.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 19. *Singing in the Worship of God.*

I. **The singing of psalms is here enjoined as a sacred branch of social worship.**—We are to glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits. To Him we are to consecrate the use of all our powers. And there is the same reason why the musical as any other faculty should be employed in His service. Praise is the most excellent part of divine worship.

II. **The matter or subject of our singing**—In psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. By psalms is intended that collection of sacred poems which passes under this name and is one of the canonical books of Scripture. By hymns may be designed other poetical compositions of Scripture as the songs of Moses, Hannah, Zechariah, Simeon, and others. By spiritual songs may be meant those pious and devout songs which in that age were composed by prophets and holy men in the Church under the immediate influence of the Spirit. The matter we sing should be accommodated to the occasion of the worship. If in the days of David it was thought necessary that on extraordinary occasions a new song should be sung, surely now we may sing some new songs on the glorious occasion of the gospel.

III. **We are to sing, making melody.**—The use of music in social worship is to assist and enliven the devotion of the heart. When music is performed with melody of sound, exactness of time, and harmony of voices, it greatly contributes to this end. Singing cannot be performed to edification and comfort without skill. The singers in the Jewish Temple were carefully instructed, and this branch of worship conducted with great order and solemnity.

IV. **In singing we must make melody in our hearts to the Lord.**—Singing as a part of religious worship must be directed to God. We sing in obedience to His command, with a sense of His presence, with hearts disposed for His service, with affections corresponding to the matter of the psalm. The man who can hear holy anthems sung to the universal Parent, with voices sweetly mingling and harmonising together, and not feel himself softened into benevolence and love and moulded into condescension and peace, must have a soul rugged as the rocks and stubborn as an oak.

Lessons.—1. *If singing is an instituted part of divine worship, all should take a share in it.* 2. *Every one according to his ability is bound to promote the psalmody of the Church.* 3. *Psalmody as a branch of divine worship should be regarded, not as a theatrical exhibition, but as a religious solemnity.*—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 20. *The Duty of Thanksgiving.*

I. **The duty to which we are exhorted.**—1. Implies a right apprehension and considerate attention to benefits conferred. 2. Requires a faithful retention of benefits in memory and frequent reflections on them. 3. A due esteem and valuation of benefits. 4. That benefits be received with a willing mind, a hearty sense, a vehement affection. 5. Always attended with the esteem, veneration, and love of the benefactor.

II. **The time allotted to the performance of the duty.**—"Always." 1. Hereby is required a frequent performance thereof. 2. Appointing and punctually observing convenient times for the purpose. 3. A vigilant attendance on the duty such as men bestow on their employments. 4. Implies a ready disposition to give thanks ever permanent in us. 5. That we embrace every opportunity of actually expressing our thankfulness.

III. **The matter of this duty.**—"For all things." 1. We are to give thanks not only for great but the least favours of God. 2. Not only for new and present benefits, but for all we have formerly or may hereafter receive. 3. Not only for pleasant occurrences of providence, but also those which are adverse. 4. Not only for temporal but for spiritual and eternal blessings.—*Barrow.*

Thanksgiving.

I. **The duty here enjoined is to give thanks.**

II. **Consider the character of that Being to whom our thanks must be supremely directed.**—"To God, even the Father."

III. **We are required to give thanks always to God.**

IV. **The matters for which we are to give thanks.**—"For all things."

V. **Consider the medium of our access to God in this duty.**—"In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 21. *Mutual Submission.*

I. **A degree of submission is due to superiors.**—Superiors in age, in knowledge and wisdom, in authority. Honour a virtuous character wherever you see it.

II. **Mutual submission as it respects equals.**—All men have the same immutable right to an equitable treatment from all with whom they have intercourse. Mutual subjection ought to be seen in families.

III. **There is a submission due to those who on some accounts may be deemed inferiors.**—Superiors owe respect to those below them. They should be easy of access, gentle in language, and condescending in deportment.

IV. **This mutual submission ought to appear in Christian Churches.**—*Ibid.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 22—33.

Duties of Wives and Husbands.

I. **The duty of the wife is submission to her husband.**—"Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands."

1. *A submission defined by religious obligation.*—"As unto the Lord" (ver. 22). This submission implies no inferiority. Husband and wife are equal before God, and each is separately responsible to Him. The husband cannot love and serve God for the wife, nor the wife for the husband; each stands related to Him as a distinct personality, with distinct duties and responsibilities for each. God has the first claim upon them both, and their relation and duties to each other must be in harmony with that supreme claim. The submission demanded is not the subjection of an inferior to a superior, but the voluntary, sympathetic obedience that can be gracefully and appropriately rendered only by an equal to an equal. "It is here that Christianity, in contrast with paganism and notably with Mahometanism, raises the weaker sex to honour. In soul and destiny it

declares the woman to be man, endowed with all rights and powers inherent in humanity. It is one of the glories of our faith that it has enfranchised our sisters, and raises them in spiritual calling to the full level of their brothers and husbands."

2. *A submission recognising the headship of the husband.*—(1) Analogous to the headship of Christ to His Church. "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church" (ver. 23). (2) Unlike that headship inasmuch as Christ is not only the head but also the Saviour of the Church. "And He is the Saviour of the body" (ver. 23). As the Saviour His headship is unrivalled and must be acknowledged by every member alike. The wife must not think too much of her husband: there is One who is superior to him, and who must be all in all to them both.

3. *A submission after the pattern of that of the Church to Christ.*—"As the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything" (ver. 24; cf. ver. 33). Religion sanctifies all relationships and makes duty a joy. As the wife obeys Christ in spiritual things, so she will obey her husband in all things righteous. Mary, wife of Prince William of Orange and the heir-apparent to the English throne, was asked what her husband the prince should be if she became queen. She called in her husband and promised him he should always bear rule; and asked only that he would obey the command, "Husbands, love your wives," as she should do that, "Wives, be obedient to your husbands in all things."

II. **The duty of the husband is to love his wife.**—1. *A love that seeks to promote the highest spiritual interests of the wife* (vers. 25-29). It must be a Christ-like, self-sacrificing, all-devoted love. It is greatly within the power of the husband to help or hinder the spiritual life of the wife. The man is apt to become so self-absorbed and forgetful that he needs reminding of his duty to love and cherish the one who should be dearer to him than any other. Assured of the reality and unselfishness of her husband's love, there is no sacrifice she will hesitate to make, nor will she spare any effort to attain the Christ-likeness of character to which he may wish to lead her. "One with Christ. This is the ideal Christian state. We have a faint reflection of this in that which should be the ideal condition of husband and wife. They are no longer twain but one flesh. They are to be as nearly as possible one person. Their thoughts, their interests, their hopes, their aims are one. Marriage was given that it might be a representation of the spiritual union between Christ and His Church. The union of each separate soul with Christ is a fragment of His union with the whole Church, and must partake of the same character. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him."

2. *A love arising from the intimacy and sacredness of the marriage bond* (vers. 30-32).—Marriage is a union for life between one man and one woman; consequently bigamy, polygamy, and voluntary divorce are all inconsistent with its nature. It must be entered into freely and cordially by the parties, with the conviction that one is suited to the other, and to take the positions involved in the natural and scriptural view of the relation. "Marriage," said Jeremy Taylor, "is a school and exercise of virtue. Here is the proper sense of piety and patience, of the duty of parents, and the charity of relatives; here kindness is spread abroad and love is united and made firm as a centre. Marriage is the nursery of heaven, hath in it the labours of love and the delicacies of friendship, the blessing of society and the union of hands and hearts. Like the useful bee, marriage builds a house, unites into societies and republics, exercises many virtues, promotes the interest of mankind, and is that state of good things to which God has designed the present constitution of the world."

3. *A love strengthened by the observance of mutual duties* (ver. 33).—Love

manifested begets love, and strengthens with exercise. The loving reverence of the wife follows on the frank and genuine love of the husband. This was an epitaph in a churchyard inscribed by a husband after sixty years of married life; "She always made home happy." The Christian conception of love and marriage began a new era in the world, and has exalted woman to her true place.

Lessons.—1. *Marriage is not to be lightly entered into.* 2. *Is dignified as a symbol of the union between Christ and His Church.* 3. *Binds the contracting parties to fidelity in observing the most sacred vows.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 22-33. *Wives and Husbands.*

I. **There are duties which are common to both the correlates.**—The husband and wife are in some respects equals. As they are one and have one common interest they ought to act with an undivided concern for the happiness of the family. They are alike bound to mutual fidelity and a chaste conversation. They are under equal obligations to study each other's peace and comfort.

II. **There are some duties particularly incumbent on the wife.**—These the apostle expresses by the terms submission, reverence, obedience, and subjection. Since the Church is subject to Christ, the woman ought to be subject to her husband, who, by Christ's authority, is constituted her head. A family should resemble a Church in union, peace, and subordination. The honour and interest of religion require that wives, by a cheerful subordination, co-operate with their husbands in all the important concerns of the household, and in the nurture, education, and government of the dependent members.

III. **There are duties particularly incumbent on the husband towards his wife.**—These the apostle expresses by the word "love," which here stands opposed to sharpness and severity. One argument for this love is the example of Christ in His love and devotion to the Church. Another reason is, the intimacy of the relationship—"Whoso loveth his wife loveth himself." Where the spirit of religion reigns in both, the union will be easy and their joint government in the family have efficacy. The maintenance of family religion depends on nothing more than the union of the heads. For how can they unite in prayers and praises who unite in nothing else.—*Lathrop.*

Vers. 23-32. *Christ and His Bride.*

I. **Christ's love to the Church** (vers. 25-27). We must value and joyfully assert our individual part in the redeeming love of the Son of God; but we must equally admit the sovereign rights of the Church in the Redeemer's passion. There is in some an absorption in the work of grace within their own hearts, an individualistic salvation-seeking that like all selfishness defeats its end, for it narrows and impoverishes the inner life thus sedulously cherished. The Church does not exist simply for the benefit of individual souls; it is an eternal institution, with an affiance to Christ, a calling and destiny of its own; within that universal sphere our personal destiny holds its particular place. The Christ is worthy and she must be made worthy. From eternity He set His love upon her; on the cross He won her back from her infidelity at the price of His blood. Through the ages He has been wooing her to Himself, and schooling her in wise and manifold ways that she may be fit for her heavenly calling. Through what cleansing fires, through what baptisms, even of blood, she has still to pass ere the consummation is reached, He only knows who loved her and gave Himself for her. He will spare to His Church nothing, either of bounty or of trial, that her perfection needs.

II. **Christ's authority over the Church** (vers. 23, 24).—The Churh is

no democracy, any more than she is an aristocracy or a sacerdotal absolutism: she is a *Christocracy*. The people are not rulers in the house of God; they are the ruled, laity and ministers alike. We acknowledge this in theory; but our language and spirit would oftentimes be other than they are, if we were penetrated with the sense of the continual presence and majesty of the Lord Jesus in our assemblies. The Church's protection from human tyranny, from schemes of ambition, from the intrusion of political methods and designs, lies in her sense of the splendour and reality of Christ's dominion and of her own eternal life in Him.

III. **The mystery of the Church's origin in Christ** (vers. 30-32).—God chose us in Christ before the world's foundation. We were created in the Son of God's love antecedently to our redemption by Him. Christ recovers through the cross that which pertains inherently to Him, which belonged to Him by nature, and is as a part of Himself. The derivation of Eve from the body of Adam, as that is affirmed in the mysterious words of Genesis, is analogous to the derivation of the Church from Christ. The latter relationship existed in its ideal, and as conceived in the purpose of God, prior to the appearance of the human race. In St. Paul's theory, the origin of the woman in man, which forms the basis of marriage in Scripture, looked farther back to the origin of humanity in Christ Himself. In some mystical but real sense marriage is a *reunion*, the reincorporation of what had been sundered. Seeking his other self, the complement of his nature, the man breaks the ties of birth and founds a new home. So the inspired author of the passage in Genesis (ii. 21-24) explains the origin of marriage, and the instinct which draws the bridegroom to his bride. But our apostle sees within this declaration a deeper truth, kept secret from the foundation of the world. When he speaks of this great mystery, he means thereby not marriage itself, but *the saying of Adam about it*. This text was a standing problem to the Jewish interpreters. "But for my part," says the apostle, "I refer it to Christ and to the Church." St. Paul, who has so often before drawn the parallel between Adam and Christ, by the light of this analogy perceives a new and rich meaning in the old dark sentence. It helps him to see how believers in Christ, forming collectively His body, are not only grafted into Him, but were derived from Him and formed in the very mould of His nature. In our union through grace and faith with Christ crucified we realise again the original design of our being. Christ has purchased by His blood no new or foreign bride, but her who was His from eternity—the child who had wandered from the Father's house, the betrothed who had left her Lord and spouse.—*Findlay*.

Vers. 25-33. *The Christian Law of Marriage*—

I. **Demands self-sacrificing love.**

II. **Recognises the sacredness of the union between the contracting parties.**

III. **Is ennobled in being a type of the union between Christ and the Church.**

IV. **Involves mutual fidelity on the part of both husband and wife.**

Vers. 25-27. *Christ's Love for the Church.*

I. **Christ's love of His Church.**—It was—1. Ancient. 2. Self-moved. 3. Active. 4. Effective.

II. **Christ's sacrifice of Himself as an exhibition of His love.**—1. Himself. His life. What a life! 2. As a sacrifice. The essence of it is vicarious suffering. 3. To all the suffering which justice demanded.

III. **Christ's more immediate object in what He has done.**—1. Sanctification. As essential as pardon. 2. By the agency of the Holy Spirit. Signified by the washing of water.

3. Through the instrumentality of the word.

IV. **Christ's ultimate aim.**—1. To present His Church to Himself. A nuptial figure. 2. Free from all imperfections. 3. Adorned with all excellencies. (1) Our obligations to Christ. (2) The real value of holiness. (3) The high destiny of believers.—*G. Brooks.*

The Future Glory of the Church.

I. **The future state of the Church.**—In describing the future condition of the Church, the apostle has evidently in his mind two previous states: her original state when lying dead in trespasses and sins, and her subsequent earthly state when separated from the mass of the ungodly and partially redeemed. We have the people of Christ before us in three distinct points of view:—

1. *As wholly defiled.*—Speaking of "sanctifying and cleansing" the Church intimates her complete defilement.

2. *As in some measure cleansed.*—Though sanctified and cleansed, we read of spots still left on the Church.

3. *As altogether pure.*—Faultless in God's presence and estimation.

II. **The causes to which this state is to be ascribed.**—1. *The love of Christ.* 2. *Love revealed in sacrifice* as another step towards final purity. 3. *The work of the Holy Spirit* (ver. 26). 4. *The word of God* (ver. 26). A right understanding of its testimony and a heartfelt belief in its truth.

III. **The great end for which all these means of holiness are brought into operation.**—"That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church" (ver. 27). The likeness of God will be put on her, the image of God shine in her; that attribute of divinity—holiness—which is the perfection of divinity will be her crown.—*C. Bradley.*

The Divine Ideal of the Church.

I. **We have an array of stupendous facts concerning the Church.**—1. *The divine prevision.* Before the eternal Son of God could give Himself for the Church, He must have had it in His mind. 2. *The Redeemer's actual love for the Church.* 3. *The Redeemer's amazing self-sacrifice on behalf of the Church.* 4. *That the Redeemer has a very definite purpose concerning His Church.*

II. **The distinguishing marks or signs of the members of the Church.**—They are personal and experimental. 1. *The casting out of natural impurities.* Improvement is not enough. Nothing but a thorough re-creation can effect what is required. 2. *The instrument of this change is the truth.* 3. *This change, this introduction into the Church, is a thing complete in itself,* becomes historical, and ought never to need repeating. 4. *The way is open for the appearance of the other personal and experimental sign — sanctification* (ver. 26). 5. *Christ's idea of the Church given in these verses is not abstract, impracticable, and untrue to the possibilities of ordinary human nature.*

III. **Here we catch a glimpse of the future and eternal glory of the Church.**—How stupendous an event it will be when, at the consummation of all things, the whole Church will be presented to the Lord Jesus! What can secure Church membership? Neither early training, nor baptism, nor the holding of an orthodox creed, nor association with a religious and devout assembly, nor the filling of ecclesiastical office, nor even intelligent approach to the table of the Lord. Such things are means to an end. That end is true membership in the Church of Christ. And that membership is attained and secured by divine renewal of the heart, and by that conformity to the mind of Christ which is expressive of the new life. The true unity of the Church of Christ is that spiritual oneness which has its expression in identity of Christian life.—*W. Hudson.*

Ver. 25. *A Noble Self-sacrifice.*—Caius Gracchus, who was the idol of

the Roman people, having carried his regard for the lower orders so far as to draw upon himself the resentment of the nobility, an open rupture ensued; and the two extremities of Rome resembled two camps—Opimius the consul on one side, and Gracchus and his friend Fulvius on the other. A battle ensued in which the consul, meeting with more vigorous resistance than he expected, proclaimed an amnesty for all those who should lay down their arms, and at the same time promised to pay for the heads of Gracchus and Fulvius their weight in gold. This proclamation had the desired effect. The populace deserted their leaders, Fulvius was taken and beheaded, and Gracchus, at the advice of his two friends, Licinius Crassus and Pomponius, determined to flee the city, and reached the bridge Sublicius, where his enemies, who pursued him close, would have overtaken and seized him if his two friends had not opposed their fury; but they saw the danger he was in and determined to save his life at the expense of their own. They defended the bridge against all the consular troops till Gracchus was out of their reach; but at length, being overpowered by numbers, and covered with wounds, they both expired on the bridge they had so valiantly defended. —*Biblical Treasury.*

Ver. 30. *Members of the Body of Christ.*

I. **The doctrine.**—The apostle is speaking of believers only; of believers as believing; of all believers. His language implies:—

1. *Union.*—Real, intimate, indissoluble.

2. *Dependence.*—Of the members on the heart. Of the members on the head.

3. *Sympathy.*—Sincere, entire, uninterrupted. Value of human sympathy. Its rarity. Its necessary imperfection. The superiority of Christ's.

II. **The duty.**—1. *Love.* A special affection arising out of a special relation.

2. *Reverence.*—There should be no unholy familiarity.

3. *Obedience.*—Responsive to His will as a part of Himself.—*G. Brooks.*

Ver. 33. *The Sanctity of Home Life.*—The Christian home is the corner-stone of modern civilisation—the best fruit Christianity has yielded the earth. The Anglo-Saxon home is the crowning glory of the race. Contrast it with French home life, or the miserable home life in Utah! National self-preservation demands a vigorous uprooting of Mormon polygamy and Western divorce lawlessness. That which is punished as a crime in the best and purest Christian lands must be punished as a crime wherever it is found. Garfield kissing his mother and his wife at his Inauguration was a sweet revelation of holy family life. —*Homiletic Monthly.*

CHAPTER VI.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Children, obey.**—Until the days of discretion arrive this is the grace of childhood. If through obedience the child errs, the responsibility of that is with those who commanded. It is only a "surrendered soul" that can sing:

"I would be treated as a child,
And guided where I go."

Ver. 2. **Honour thy father and mother.**—As long as they are so.

Ver. 3. **That it may be well with thee.**—If ever "that it may be" could mean "and so it shall be," we should strenuously plead for that meaning here. For it would be a pitiable thing indeed to find a man showing filial piety as a profitable course.

Ver. 4. **Nurture and admonition.**—The former word is more general than the latter, including everything that goes to the instruction of the child. "Admonition" is reproof, either of word or punishment, or yet again, warning.

Ver. 5. **Servants, be obedient.**—R.V. margin, "bond-servants." There was One who had "become obedient even unto death," having taken "the form of a bond-servant" (Phil. ii. 7). **With fear and trembling.**—"With that zeal which is ever keenly apprehensive of not doing enough" (*Meyer*). The same phrase is used of the way in which our personal salvation is to be worked out (Phil. ii. 12).

Ver. 6. **Not with eyeservice.**—A word used only by St. Paul. The thing it describes is easily recognised to-day.

Ver. 7. **With good will doing service.**—If a philosopher-slave like Epictetus could rise superior to his condition, surely Christianity could do as much for the humblest believer.

Ver. 8. **Knowing that whatsoever good . . . bond or free.**

"This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold,
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told."
George Herbert.

Ver. 9. **Do the same things unto them.**—The utmost application of the "golden rule." **Forbearing threatening** "may either mean abating or giving up."

Ver. 10. **Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.**—In i. 19 the phrase "power of His might" is reversed. See note there.

Ver. 11. **The whole armour.**—"The panoply." "A complete suit of armour." **The wiles of the devil.**—A craftily designed plan of attack.

Ver. 12. **For we wrestle.**—We need not suppose a transference of the metaphor. It may describe the hand-to-hand fight in which equally matched opponents refuse to back an inch. **Not against flesh and blood.**—With "vulnerable crests" (*Macbeth*). When ghostly combatants appear, unassailable, and with powers of injury against which we are helpless, we may well say:

"Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble."

Ver. 13. **In the evil day.**—Compare v. 16. A day of great peril. **And having done all, to stand.**—"When the hurly-burly's done" to find oneself unvanquished.

Ver. 14. **Stand therefore.**—The words ring short and sharp as a bugle-call. **Loins girt about with truth.**—"To speak of a well-equipped warrior without a girdle is a *contradictio in adjecto*, for it was just the girdle which produced the free bearing and movement and the necessary attitude of the warrior" (*Meyer*). "**Truth** is a subjective conception corresponding with the eternal realities" (*Beet*). **Breastplate of righteousness.**—"As the actual warrior has protected the breast when he has laced the corslet over his chest, so with you righteousness . . . renders your breast (heart and will) inaccessible to the hostile influence of the demons" (*Meyer*).

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

Ver. 15. **Feet shod.**—Ensuring agility and a firm foothold. **Preparation of the gospel of peace.**—"Preparation" might perhaps give way to "preparedness." St. Paul does not mind

a paradox. "What hast thou to do with peace?" said one soldier to another; but the herald was a soldier too.

Ver. 16. **Above all, taking the shield.**—Large enough to block the entrance to a doorway—being about four feet by two and a half. The lighter missiles were harmless against a roof of these shields over-lapped. They were of wood, thickly coated with leather. **Quench the fiery darts.**—"Arrows tipped with inflammable material, and shot off after having been kindled" (*Meyer*).

Ver. 17. **Take the helmet of salvation.**—For the large shield might leave the head exposed to the archer's aim. **The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**—How effectual in fence and thrust it was in the hands of the Captain of our salvation, the "world-ruler" had experienced.

Ver. 18. **Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.**—Here we have the recognition of a directing Superior. The true soldier fights under the direction of his ἀρχηγός. The "sounds of strife" are dying away in this verse.

Ver. 20. **An ambassador in bonds.**—R.V. "in chains." Sustaining the honour of Christ under personal indignity. **That I may speak boldly.**—It needed not only the apostle's own, but his readers' prayers to enable him to speak freely within stroke of the "lion's paw" (2 Tim. iv. 17).

Ver. 21. **Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister.**—If all servants were "brethren" first, the troubles of our modern commercial life would be few.

Ver. 23. **Peace, love, and faith.**—A worthy triad, and the greatest of *these* is love.

Ver. 24. **Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.**—Paul's favourite word "grace" comes in as "epilogue"—as it was "prologue" (i. 2). Sincerity means incorruptly—to love in a spirit corruption cannot touch.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—4.

Duties of Children and Parents.

I. **The duty of children to parents is to obey.**—1. *This obedience has the divine sanction.* "In the Lord" (ver. 1). Both the command and the obedience must be in harmony with the relation in which both parents and children stand towards God. The parent who has not himself learnt to respect and obey the law of God is ill prepared for the grave responsibilities of family government. Natural affection and the instincts of common sense will guide the parents in the ordinary affairs of home-life, and the sense of dependence and respect should induce instinctive obedience in the child. No parent has any right to enforce an obedience which is not in harmony with the supreme claims of God. The child who submits to the will of his parents is taught at the same time to obey the higher law of God. If he defies parental authority and persists in disobedience, he is sure to be treated in the same way if he ever has children of his own. To be able to govern we must first learn to obey.

2. *This obedience is in harmony with natural order and the eternal principles of justice.*—"For this is right" (ver. 1). Obedience is the law of the universe, and without it everything would rush into anarchy and chaos. Law is so all-pervasive as to cover every department and relationship of life, and its breach in any sphere carries with it its own punishment. Disobedience is not only a wrong to the person who commits it, but it is an injustice to somebody else. Obedience to parents in things lawful is no hardship. It is becoming and commendable because it is right. It is the perversity of our nature when it becomes difficult to do right. Disobedience is a wilful divergence from the straight line of rectitude, and is the essence of all sin.

3. *This obedience ensures the divine blessing* (vers. 2, 3).—It is our duty to obey irrespective of any advantage to be secured. The loyal heart looks, not to the reward, but to the duty. It is no merit to do what it is our duty to do. Yet such is the condescension and goodness of God that He attaches a special blessing to every act of unselfish obedience. Filial obedience should not be dilatory and reluctant, but prompt, cheerful, self-denying, and uniform. Obedience is the path of safety. A pointsman in Prussia was at the junction

of two lines of railway, lever in hand, for a train that was signalled. The engine was within a few seconds of reaching the embankment when the man, turning his head, perceived his little boy playing between the rails on which the train was running. He stuck to his lever, but shouted to the child, "Lie down! lie down!" The train passed, and the father rushed forward to pick up what he feared would be the mangled body of his child; but what was his joy to find the boy had at once obeyed his order, had lain down, and the train passed over him without injuring him. His prompt obedience saved his life. Dutiful children secure the blessing of God. Filial obedience practised in the Christian home forms habits of promptitude, self-control, and self-respect which are important conditions of success and prosperity.

II. **The duty of parents to children is to exercise discipline.**—1. *Not by enforcing commands that tend to irritate.* "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath" (ver. 4). Children are a sacred trust and solemn responsibility; not to be weakly fondled or foolishly spoilt, but to be wisely, kindly, and strictly disciplined into obedience and duty. The Chinese have a proverb, when a son is born into a family a bow and arrow are hung before the gate. In Eastern books sons are spoken of as arrows of their fathers. "As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth" (Ps. cxxvii. 4). As the bowman straightens and polishes his arrow, gives it a sharp and solid point, and wings it with feathers, so parents must train and equip their children that they may go straight to the point of duty and hit the mark. The arrows that are not prepared and directed when in the hand may, when they are gone abroad into the world, and all parental training is too late, prove arrows in the heart that will rankle with unspeakable pain. The training of children is also a training of the parent. Many a hint is unconsciously given as to "training up a *parent* in the way he should go." While there should be firm discipline, there should not be exasperating and tantalising severity. Rousing a child's anger is not the best way of subduing it. A sullen submission gained, by provoking and then crushing an angry opposition, is rendered with a sense of injustice and wrong that will breed future mischief. Monod says: "Correction and instruction should proceed from the Lord, and be directed by the Spirit of the Lord in such a way that it is not so much the father who corrects his children and teaches them, as the Lord through him." The father who chastises in wrath provokes the child to wrath and rebellion.

2. *But by judicious religious culture.*—"But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (ver. 4). Children are the glifts of God to be trained for God. They are susceptible of genuine religious experience, and are often nearer the truth than grown-up people. Christ recognised the spiritual faculty in children, and gave them a conspicuous place in His kingdom. When He wished to show the type of true greatness, He did not point to stars or mountains or earthly dignities, but "called a little child unto Him and set him in the midst" (Matt. xviii. 2-4). Children are capable of useful religious service, and in many ways may be little missionaries for Christ. Dr. W. L. Breckenridge once said to his mother: "Mother, I think you ruled us with too rigid a rod in our boyhood. It would have been better had you used gentler methods." The old lady straightened up and said: "Well, William, when you have raised up three as good preachers as I have then you can talk." The smaller magnets have proportionately much the greater power, and children have a remarkable spiritual force with which the Christian parent has to deal.

Lessons.—1. *Parental discipline should be in harmony with the law of God.* 2. *The rigour of parental discipline should be tempered with love.* 3. *Respect and obedience to parents will be divinely rewarded.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1-4. *The Mutual Duties of Children and Parents.*

I. **Children are to obey and honour their parents.**—1. *Children owe to their parents an inward affection and regard.* Their obedience should flow from love, gratitude, and esteem. The love parents bear to their children entitles them to reciprocal affection. 2. *They are to honour their parents by external tokens of respect.* 3. *They are to obey the just commands of their parents.* 4. *They are to receive with decent and humble regard the instructions, counsels, and reproofs of their parents.* 5. *They should remunerate the favours received from their parents.* 6. *They are encouraged in their obedience by the divine promise.*

II. **The duties of parents to children.**—1. *To instruct their children in the doctrines and duties of religion.* 2. *To endeavour by arguments, exhortations, and reproofs to form their lives according to those instructions.* 3. *To regulate the diversions of their children.* 4. *To maintain the worship of God in their houses.* 5. *To let their conversation be exemplary.* 6. *To train up their children with diligence in some honest business.* 7. *To commend their children to God and the word of His grace.*—*Lathrop.*

Vers. 1, 2. *Obedience.*—The dutiful obedience of children is declared by God in the fifth commandment to be the foundation of all social happiness and of every social virtue.

I. **The behaviour of a child to its parents is no such trifle as too many perverse children and too many foolish parents are prone to fancy it.**—How often we hear mothers saying, "It is only the poor child's way; it is a little pettish and fractious at times, but it means no harm by it. To be sure it does not mind me quite so well as it ought to do; but children will be children." So the child goes on uncorrected, and grows up disobedient and undutiful—with habits and dispositions so evil that God has classed them with the very worst crimes, with false swearing, theft, adultery, and even murder. If undutifulness in children had been a mere trifle, would God have put it into this black list?

II. **Observe the reasonableness and justice of the duty of children to obey their parents.**—The child is helpless and entirely dependent on its parents' care and kindness. So strong and lasting is a mother's love that, while other animals drive their young away as soon as they can feed themselves, the love of human parents descends and prolongs itself even to their offspring's offspring. Think of their fears, their wishes, their prayers for your souls' welfare. Your love to them should be dutiful love, showing itself in acts of gentleness, respect, and kindness, and in the strictest and readiest obedience. Children are bound to obey, not from constraint, nor from fear of blows, but readily, willingly, cheerfully. The obedience paid for fear of stripes is the obedience of a mule, not of a son. What can a child know save what its parents teach it? Its parents for a time stand in the place of God to it; as such, it must believe them and obey them. You may be the better for their experience, you may profit by their warnings, you may learn from their lessons.

III. **Observe the use and benefit of obedience in forming the character of the child.**—It is in the school of home, amid the little hardships, restraints, crosses, and disappointments which every child must needs meet with, that the great lesson of obedience is best learnt. There is a root of self-will born in every man, and out of this root grow two evil and misshapen stems—pride and disobedience. You may as well expect water to burn and fire to wet, you may as well expect a barren common that has never been ploughed and sown to produce a crop of wheat,

as that a child, which has gone on year after year in pride, self-will, and disobedience to its parents, will readily or easily tear off its habits and its nature, to walk humbly and obediently before God. We must cultivate obedience in the child that it may outgrow, overtop, and stifle, or at least keep under, the evil stem of disobedience. We must cultivate humility in him, that it may keep under the evil of pride. We must train and accustom him to habits of steady self-denial, which our Lord has recommended to us as the best yokes for our headstrong and else unmanageable self-will. Thus the fifth commandment is a kind of practical school where the child, in obeying its parents, learns to obey all to whom it owes obedience.—*A. W. Hare.*

Ver. 4. *A Father's Charge.*

I. **The duties parents owe to their children.**—1. *Children are weak and helpless and totally incapable of caring for themselves*—hence arises the first duty which parents owe them, that of feeding and clothing them. 2. *Are ignorant and without understanding*—hence they should not only be fed but taught. 3. *Are unruly, and therefore must be governed.* 4. *Are prone to evil, and therefore must be restrained.*

II. **The obligations parents are under to practise these duties.**—1. *They should do it for their own sakes.* 2. *For their children's sake.* 3. *For society's sake.* 4. *For God's sake.*

Learn.—1. *The practicability of a religious education.* 2. *How awful is the responsibility of parents—of fathers especially.—Sketches.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 5—9.

The Duties of Servants and Masters.

I. **The duty of the servant to the master is to obey.**—1. *This obedience is to be rendered with conscientious solicitude.* "With fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart; . . . not with eyeservice, as menpleasers" (vers. 5, 6). There must be *a genuine care for our work* "Be obedient, with fear and trembling." The fear enjoined is no dread of human displeasure, of the master's whip or tongue. It is the same fear and trembling with which we are bidd n to work out our own salvation (Phil. ii. 12). The inward work of the soul's salvation and the outward work of the busy hands labouring in the mine, or at the loom, or in the lowliest domestic duties—all alike are to be performed under a solemn responsibility to God and in the presence of Christ, the Lord of nature and of men. No man, whether he be a minister of state or a stable-groom, will dare to do heedless work who lives and acts in that august Presence. The sense of Christ's Lordship ensures *honesty in work.* "Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers." It is the common fault and temptation of servants in all degrees to observe the master's eye, and to work busily or slackly as they are watched or not. Such workmen act as they do because they look to men and not to God. Their work is without conscience and self-respect. Let us all adopt St. Paul's maxim; it will be an immense economy. What armies of overlookers and inspectors we shall be able to dismiss when every servant works as well behind his master's back as to his face, when every manufacturer and shopkeeper puts himself in the purchaser's place and deals as he would have others deal with him (*Findlay*).

2. *This obedience should be cheerful and hearty as rendered unto a higher than an earthly master.*—"As unto Christ; . . . doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men" (vers. 5-7). Obedience should be not only careful and honest, but hearty. The heart is the source of our greatest power. Nothing can be translated into an act that has not first been conceived and set in motion by the heart. As the stroke of the piston sets in motion the most complicated machinery and produces certain results, so the throb of the heart brings all our activities into play and gives

direction and character to our work. The worth of our work as a whole will be decided by the heartiness we throw into every single duty. Workmanship counts for much. I have read of a chain, weighing two ounces, costing £170, being 163,000 times more than the value of the original bit of iron from which it was made. The work of the artist made all the difference; he put into it his best self, his heart, his genius. So in the works of the divine Creator. The symmetry, the beauty, the perfect balance and shining magnificence of the world are the result of the patient work and hearty enthusiasm with which the great Architect has put together and finished the most minute parts of the planet.

3. *Genuine obedience is always rewarded.*—"Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord" (ver. 8). Even in this world conscientious work is not without reward. "In all labour there is profit. The diligent hand maketh rich." A stationer settling a large account with a paper-manufacturer, said: "I owe all my success in business to you; but let me ask you how a man of your caution came to give credit so readily to a beginner of my slender means?" "Because," said the paper-maker, "at whatever hour in the morning I passed to my business, I always observed you at yours with your coat off." Work gives character, and is the pathway to success and wealth. But in the world to come, when servant and master stand before the bar of Christ, reward will be equitably meted out according to the work of each.

II. **The duty of the master is to act towards his servant on the same principles as obedience to himself is regulated.**—"And, ye masters, do the same things unto them" (ver. 9). The master is to put himself in the place of his servant, and act towards him as he would desire to be treated if their positions were reversed. It is a practical application of the great rule, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them"—a rule we are in danger of interpreting on one side only: our own side.

1. *To avoid irritating severity.*—"Forbearing threatening" (ver. 9). The slave in early times was treated as scarcely human, and was ruled by the fear of punishment. Christianity in the beginning did not interfere with domestic slavery; but it introduced principles which, wherever, adopted utterly abolished slavery. The Christian master cannot act on the policy of cruelty, but treats his servants with justice and kindness.

2. *To remember that both are servants of a higher and impartial Master.*—"Knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him" (ver. 9). A party of friends setting out together upon a journey soon find it to be the best for all sides that while they are upon the road one of the company should wait upon the rest, another ride forward to seek out lodging and entertainment, a third carry the portmanteau, a fourth take charge of the horses, a fifth bear the purse, conduct, and direct the route; not forgetting, however, that as they were equal and independent when they set out, so they are all to return to a level again at their journey's end. The same regard and respect, the same forbearance, lenity, and reserve in using their service, the same mildness in delivering commands, the same study to make their journey comfortable and pleasant which he whose lot it was to direct the rest would in common decency think himself bound to observe towards them, ought we to show to those who, in the casting of the parts of human society, happen to be placed within our power or to depend upon us (*Paley*). Master and man must give an account to Him who will judge every act according to its merit.

Lessons.—1. *Masters and servants are amenable to divine law.* 2. *Neither master nor servant gains any advantage by tactics that violate divine law.* 3. *Where the Christian spirit predominates trade disputes will soon be satisfactorily settled.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 5-9. *The Duties of Servants and Masters.*

I. **The duties of servants.**—1. *To be obedient to their masters.* This must be understood with the same limitation as all other commands enjoining relative duties. We are to obey God rather than men. Servants no further obey their masters according to the will of God than they make His will the rule and measure of their obedience to their masters. 2. *Servants owe their masters reverence as well as obedience.* 3. *There is an honour, as well as fear, due to their masters.* 4. *Cheerfulness in their obedience is recommended by the apostle.* 5. *Diligence of faithfulness is another duty which they owe to their masters.* 6. *They are to be patient and submissive,* though they meet with usage more severe than they think reasonable, not breaking their own obligations, or deserting their master's service for trivial causes, but bearing his smaller indiscretions without complaint, and in cases of real injury seeking relief in a prudent manner and by lawful means. 7. *In all their service they should act with an aim to please God and to obtain His approbation.*

II. **The duties of masters to their servants.**—1. *Their government is to be mild and prudent, not passionate and severe.* 2. *With respect to apprentices, the contract binds the master not only to give them comfortable support, but to instruct them in his business and profession.* 3. *With respect to labourers, justice obliges us to give them the stipulated wages when they have faithfully performed the promised service.* 4. *With respect to all servants, equity requires that we treat them with humanity and kindness,* and contribute all proper assistance to render them useful, virtuous, and happy.—*Lathrop.*

Vers. 6-8.—*Christian Servitude.*—1. To propose to ourselves the pleasing of men as our great design is inconsistent with the work of grace in the heart and with that subjection we owe to Christ. The meanest service is service done to Christ, and will be accepted by Him as such. 2. So ingrate is man, and so slow to reward those from whom he receives favour, that a man can never heartily do service to the most of men, except he look to God, whom to serve in the meanest employment is a reward in itself. 3. The Lord in dispensing rewards looks not to the external beauty, splendour, or greatness of the work, but to the honesty and sincerity of it. —*Fergusson.*

Ver. 9. *Masters accountable to God.*—1. There is no power among men so absolute—not that of kings and supreme rulers—but implies an obligation, through virtue of God's ordinance, on those invested with it to make conscience of duties towards their inferiors and subjects. 2. As it is usual for powers on earth sinfully to oversee and not to punish the cruel and unjust dealings of masters towards servants, so those sins most connived at by men are most severely taken notice of by God. 3. It is too ordinary for men in place and authority to carry themselves as if they had none above them to be accountable to, or to dream that the Lord will not take such strict account of them as of their underlings and servants.—*Ibid.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 10—12.

The Christian Warfare—

I. **Can be fought only with divine help.**—"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (ver. 10). The apostle has dwelt like one enraptured on the sublime constitution and glorious destiny of the Church; now he deals with

the formidable foes with which the Church will have to contend. He sees the evil forces gathering, and hears the clash of arms among the approaching enemies. He warns believers that unaided they will be powerless in the strife and must suffer defeat. They are secure and will be victorious only as they make the strength of God their own. The strength of the general, in other hosts, lies in his troops; he flies, as a great commander once said, upon their wings; if their feathers be clipped, their power broken, he is lost. But in the Christian army the strength of every saint lies in the Lord of hosts. God can overcome His enemies without their hands; but they cannot even defend themselves without His arm. Man is impotent without the strength of God. If the ship, launched, rigged, and with her sails spread, cannot stir till the wind fills them, much less can the timber in the carpenter's yard hew and frame itself into a ship. Power to contend with the spiritual foes must come from God.

II. **Involves a fierce conflict with the powers of evil.**—1. *A conflict, not with men, but with unseen spiritual enemies.* "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities" (ver. 12). The apostle brings out in bold relief the terrible foes they are summoned to encounter. (1) *As to their position.* They are no subalterns, but foes of mighty rank, the nobility and chieftains of the spirit-world. (2) *Their office.* Their domain is this darkness in which they exercise imperial sway. (3) *Their essence.* They are not encumbered with an animal frame, but are spirits. (4) *Their character.* They are evil—their appetite for evil only exceeds their capacity for producing it (*Eadie*). The Church is engaged in a double conflict—of the flesh and of the spirit. We are assailed with the temptations of the world of sense, and with seductions of error that attack us in the world of mind; and in both spheres we have to contend with the subtle influences set in motion by the rulers of the darkness of this world. Our foes invade "the high places" of our faith and hope, and would rob us of our heaven.

2. *A conflict with unseen spiritual enemies led by an astute and subtle commander.*—"That ye may be able to withstand against the wiles of the devil" (ver. 11). The New Testament assumes the personality of Satan. This belief runs counter to modern thought, governed as it is by the tendency to depersonalise existence. The conception of evil spirits given us in the Bible is treated as an obsolete superstition; and the name of the evil one with multitudes serves only to point a profane or careless jest. To Jesus Christ, Satan was no figure of speech, but a thinking and active being, of whose presence and influence He saw tokens everywhere in this evil world. Satan's empire is ruled with a settled policy, and his warfare carried on with a system of strategy which takes advantage of every opening for attack. The manifold combinations of error, the various arts of seduction and temptation, the ten thousand forms of the deceit of unrighteousness constitute "the wiles of the devil." Satan is no longer the God of this world since Christianity rose to its ascendant. The manifestations of demonism are, at least in Christian lands, vastly less conspicuous than in the first age of the Church. But they are more bold than wise who deny their existence, and who profess to explain all occult phenomena and phrenetic moral aberrations by physical causes (*Findlay*).

III. **Is victorious only as the warrior is armed with the divine panoply.**—"Put on the whole armour of God" (ver. 11). They who put on Christ are well clothed; they are armed from head to foot, and are proof against the darts of the devil. The Christless man is defenceless; his own understanding and gifts do not sufficiently arm him. The soldier comes into the field with no arms but what his general commands: it is not left to every one's fancy to bring what weapons he pleases; this would breed confusion. So the Christian soldier must put on the armour God provides, and be completely clothed with it. To leave one part

unguarded will bring disaster. In one of the famous battles between the English and French, that which lost France the day was a shower of English arrows which so galled the horses that they became unmanageable, put the whole army into disorder, and trod down their own men. So if there be the least loophole in our armour the wily adversary will quickly discover it and shoot through his fiery darts which will effect confusion and defeat.

Lessons.—1. *The Christian life is a conflict between good and evil.* 2. *God is always on the side of the good.* 3. *The Christian warrior must fight with weapons divinely provided.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 10-12. *A Call to Christian Fortitude.*

I. **Here is an exhortation to Christian fortitude.**—"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." It is not bodily but mental strength which is here intended. True fortitude or courage is a temper of mind by which we steadily follow the calls of duty, without being deterred by danger or diverted by difficulty. It is a virtue founded in a regard to God and supported by faith in Him. It is cool and deliberate, not rash and impetuous; it is kind and compassionate, not cruel and revengeful; it is steady and patient, not fickle and inconstant; it continues in well-doing, persuaded that its labour is not in vain.

II. **A warning against the enemies to be opposed.**—The apostle mentions two sorts of enemies.

1. *The first he calls flesh and blood.*—The motions of our animal nature. The phrase may further intend those sensible objects which are suited to gratify fleshly desires; or it may intend mankind, who are partakers of flesh and blood.

2. *The other kind of enemies with whom we are to contend are evil spirits.*—These spirits are enemies to mankind. Their number is great, and the terms used denote a subordination among them. They are not divided against themselves, but act in concert under the direction of one leading spirit, who is called the devil and Satan. They have great power over such as submit to their dominion. Their chief influence is over the ignorant and superstitious. They most successfully carry on their designs in the dark. When the gospel began to shine, Satan began to fall. Among those who reject the gospel he recovers his full dominion.—*Lathrop.*

Vers. 11, 12. *The Christian Warfare.*

I. **Consider the danger to which we are exposed.**—As in other cases so it is in this: our greatest danger lies in not feeling our danger, and so not being prepared to meet it.

1. *View the enemy we have to contend with.*—He is one who bears an inveterate hatred against us, and seeks nothing less than our destruction or eternal overthrow. . . . He hates us as God's creatures, but especially as those who have been rescued from his power and taken up arms against him; nothing now will satisfy him but our eternal ruin. . . . It is therefore a struggle of life for life; if we do not overcome him, he will overcome us. It is in vain to think of being neuter, or making peace with him.

2. *He is mightier than we are;* and unless we have help from above, we are no match for him. . . . We know but little of the power of wicked spirits, abstractly considered; but viewed as the god of this world, Satan has all its temptations in alliance with him.

3. *He is an artful enemy.* . . . We are told of the "wiles of the devil," hiding his designs, and falling upon us when we least expect it. We are in his net before we are aware, and when Providence seems to smile upon us (Deut. viii. 12). . . . He studies our propensities, and suits his temptations to them (Eph. iv. 14).

4. *He is invisible.* . . . If he were "flesh and blood," like ourselves, we might beware; but his influence is like the mighty pestilence, which walks in darkness. . . . When least suspected, danger is nigh.

5. *He is near us*, as it were, within our gates. The safety of a nation menaced by an enemy often depends on his being kept at a distance, by walls or seas, or fortresses of defence. But here it is supposed that the enemy has entered into our borders, and that we have no other resource left but to struggle as it were for life. . . .

6. *What is still worse, he has a strong party within us.*

7. *On the issue of this warfare depend all our hopes.*—If we "stand" not in this, our loss when defeated can never be retrieved.

II. **The armour provided for us.**—1. *In general, this armour is the grace of the gospel believed and trusted in.* In common warfare it is usual for the commanders to persuade their enemies to think highly of their strength; but in this it is quite the reverse. We must go as Israel was always taught to do, as having no might of our own, but deriving all our strength from the Lord.

2. *It is described as a whole or perfect armour.*—Sufficient to defend us in every part. . . . "Truth" is the girdle to strengthen us; "righteousness" a breastplate; the "gospel" of peace as shoes, by which we shall be able to trample upon the lion and the adder, the young lion and the dragon; "faith" is a shield; "salvation," or the hope of eternal life, a helmet. . . . All this armour is to be drawn from the truths of the everlasting gospel.

3. *The use to be made of it is*, that we may be able to "withstand," and to face the enemy. There is no armour for the back; he that fleeth is wholly defenceless, and must inevitably fall.

III. **The necessity of putting on this armour.**—Armour is of no avail, unless it be used. The application of the gospel is that which proves our security.

IV. **The inducement to put on this armour.**—"That we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (ver. 11). Many neglecting this armour have been foiled in the day of battle. —*Theological Sketch Book.*

Ver. 11. *The Wiles of the Devil.*

I. **Some of those artifices by which the devil entices men to sin.**—1. *He often presents to man the pleasing advantages of sin, while its judicial consequences are kept in the background.* Sin is often presented to man under the form of virtue or religion. The names of sins are changed in order that their natures may seem changed. Sin is thus recommended to the more tender conscience. The vileness and criminality of sin are often extenuated to man by plausible excuses. They need an apology—youth, old age, strong temptation, a desire to please, to prevent loss of place, provision for a family, etc. The inconsistencies of the acknowledged people of God are often pleaded as an apology for sin. The falls of God's people have been recorded for good; but the record has been perverted to evil. A legitimate use of the record is to prevent despair on the part of God's people who have fallen. But, by Satan, the beacon has been converted into a decoy.

2. *The sinner is often freed from his difficulties in sinning by false views of God's character and of the design of Christ's work.*—God is regarded as a Being of mere mercy. Christ is thought of as saving from sin's consequences, rather than from sin itself. The individual is often persuaded to expose himself to temptation, under the impression that he will resist it.

II. **Some of the artifices by which he entices men from the performance of positive duty.**—1. *Many are restrained from duties by a consideration of their hardness in themselves* (Matt. x 34-39). 2. *Many are persuaded to let duty alone, on account of the sacrifices which a performance of it involves.* 3. *Argument against a full devotedness to the service of God may sometimes*

be drawn from the fewness and meanness of those who are engaged in it (John vii. 48). 4. *An argument against the necessity of duty is drawn from the doctrines of grace* (Rom. vi. 2, 3; Jas. ii. 17). 5. *The worth and value of all performances are taken away by the trust in them for righteousness to which Satan prompts the heart.—Stewart.*

Ver. 12. *The Invisible Enemies of Man.*

I. **Spiritual forces are much greater, much more efficient, much more formidable than any mere material forces.**—A strong will is a more formidable thing than the most highly developed muscle. An idea which appeals to the intelligence and heart of the multitude is likely to do more work and to wield a greater sway in the end than any number of batteries and parks of artillery. It is in the encounter, not of brute force with conscience and with thought, but in the encounter of ideas with ideas, in the encounter of wills with wills, that the destiny of the world is ultimately decided. St. Paul knew that the Church had to contend with the thought and the reason of paganism much more truly than with its proconsuls and its legions; and as he wrote to the Ephesians, he did not mean merely human principalities and powers, since he contrasts the beings of whom he is speaking with mere flesh and blood.

II. **Behind all that met the eye in daily life the apostle discovered another world that did not meet the eye.**—He discerned other forms hovering, guiding, marshalling, arranging, inspiring that which met the eye. "Do not let us deceive ourselves," he cries, "as if we had only to encounter so many social or political forces, so many human minds and wills, so many human errors, human prejudices, human traditions, human passions; our real enemies are not human, they lie in ambush behind the manifold activities of man; they are really supersensuous. Two great departments of moral life among men are watched over, each one of them beyond the sphere of human life, by beings of greater power, greater intelligence, greater intensity of purpose than man in the world of spirits. These spiritual beings, good and evil, act upon humanity as clearly, as certainly, and as constantly as man himself acts upon the lower creatures around. It is not any mere disposition, inseparable from the conditions of human thought, to personify, to externalise passion, which has peopled the imagination of Christendom with demons. It is within ourselves that we meet now, as the first Christians met, the onset of the principalities and powers. It is in resisting them, in driving from us in the name of Christ the spirits of untruthfulness, of sloth, of anger, and of impure desire, that we really contribute our little share to the issue of the great battle that rages still."

III. **To love truth and righteousness is to hate their contraries.**—Hatred of evil is distinct from any hatred of those who do evil, and who are objects of sincere sorrow, and have claims on Christian charity. The easy tolerance of moral evil is one of the most alarming features of our day. Only when the struggle with evil is a matter of personal experience do we hate it, and enter even remotely into the apostle's stern language about its agents and its champions.—*H. P. Liddon.*

The Enemies of Believers.

I. **The enemies referred to are here described as numerous.**—1. *They are here spoken of in the plural number*, as they are also in other passages: "The angels which kept not their first estate," "The devil and his angels." The names here employed are collective, and imply numbers. We read of a single person being possessed with many devils. 2. *Hence the whole world has been filled with their worship and studded with their temples.* 3. *Hence the strength of the temptations with which each one is tried.* 4. *Hence the intensity of human wickedness.* 5. *Hence the need of watchfulness.*

II. **The enemies here spoken of are**

represented as being in a kind of subordination the one to the other—there are "principalities."—1. *There may be remains among them of that diversity of rank which originally existed.* 2. *It may be a submission called for by difference of intellectual and innate power.* 3. *It may be made conducive to the more successful waging of the war in which they are engaged*—giving unity of aim, of plan, of co-operation. They leave no point neglected; turn all their strength to account. All unity is not of God.

III. **The enemies here described are singly and as detached mighty for evil.**—They are "powers." 1. *Power intellectual.* 2. *Power physical.* 3. *Power directed.* 4. *Collective power.*

IV. **The apostle characterises these adversaries as the rulers of the darkness of this world.**—1. *Here a limitation of Satan's dominion is expressed.* "Rulers of the darkness of this world"—of the hiding and blinding errors which abound—of those deceived and misled. 2. *It is as the prince of darkness that he contends,* using falsehood and the wicked as his instruments.

V. **The enemies are spiritual in their nature.**—1. *They are intelligent and crafty.* 2. *Invisible.* 3. *Active and unwearied.*

VI. **They are wicked spirits.**—1. *They are in themselves wicked.* 2. *They would make others wicked.* 3. *They employ the most wicked means.*

Lessons.—1. *Watch.* 2. *Pray.* 3. *Resist.* 4. *Stand fast.*—*Stewart.*

Evil Angels.

I. **The nature and properties of evil angels.**—1. *Their original properties were the same as those of the holy angels.* 2. *We do not know either the occasion of their apostasy or what effect it immediately produced upon them.* 3. *From the time they shook off their allegiance to God, they shook off all goodness, and contracted those tempers which are most hateful to Him and most opposite to His nature.* 4. *In the prosecution of their infernal designs they are diligent in the highest degree.* 5. *They do not wander at large, but are all united under one common head.*

II. **The employment of evil angels.**—1. *They are, as far as God permits, the governors of the world.* 2. *Satan and all his angels are continually warring against us, and watching over every child of man.* 3. *By them the foolish hearts of those who know not God are darkened.* 4. *They hinder every good word and work.* 5. *There is no evil done, spoke, or thought without the assistance of the devil.* 6. *Such is the malice of the wicked one that he will torment whom he cannot destroy.* In all these instances we say "the devil," as if there was only one, because these spirits, innumerable as they are, all act in concert, and because we know not whether one or more are concerned in this or that work of darkness.—*Wesley.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 13—17.

The Christian Warrior equipped.

I. **He is clothed from head to foot with defensive armour.**—1. *The girdle of truth.* "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth" (ver. 14). The military girdle was the belt or cincture with which the warrior braced himself round the waist, to tighten and keep every part of his armour in its true place, that there might not be anything loose and trailing about him to encumber his movements. Everything about him must be tense and firm, that he may be prepared to receive the attack of the enemy, however suddenly and powerfully made, and to act with decision and concentrated energy. So the Christian warrior must be strengthened and sustained with the girdle of truth. The truth of the gospel must be known and conscientiously embraced, so that we may detect the numerous foes that error is constantly letting loose upon us, and be able to attack and conquer them. To cast away our girdle is to incapacitate ourselves

for the combat, and to expose ourselves to wounds and defeat. Conscious integrity inspires the spiritual warrior with confidence and bravery. "Let this be my brazen wall, that no man can reproach me with a crime, and that I am conscious of my own integrity." On the truth we take our stand, and by the truth we stand. If we keep the truth, the truth will keep us, and we shall not be "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine." "The luxury of agnosticism, the languors of doubt, the vague sympathies and hesitant eclecticism in which delicate and cultured minds are apt to indulge; the lofty critical attitude as of some intellectual god sitting above the strife of creeds, which others find congenial—these are conditions of mind unfit for the soldier of Christ Jesus. He must have sure knowledge, definite and decided purposes—a soul girdled with truth."

2. *The breastplate of righteousness.*—"And having on the breastplate of righteousness" (ver. 14). The military breastplate or cuirass was the chief piece of defensive armour. It consisted of two parts or wings: one covered the whole region of the thorax and protected the vital organs of the body, and the other covered the back as far down as the front part extended. As the breastplate guarded the vital functions contained within the region of the thorax, so righteousness—the life of God in the soul of man—defends everything on which the spiritual existence and triumph of the Christian warrior depend. Righteousness—conscious integrity of character—is an impenetrable mail from which the missiles of the enemy fall pointless. Rectitude of life is an invulnerable defence against the most furious attacks of calumny and oppression: it is an immovable rock that breaks up the dark billows of opposition into clouds of helpless spray.

3. *The greaves, or feet-guards.*—"Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (ver. 15). The military greaves or brazen boots covered the shin or front of the leg. A kind of *solen* was often used which covered the sole and laced about the instep, preventing the foot from being wounded by thorns or rugged ways, and giving firmness and security to the foothold. Thus shod, the warrior would take his stand with safety, or move with alertness over all sorts of ground. Being "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" indicates that the Christian soldier is ever ready to move with expedition and willingness in publishing the good tidings of peace. The Israelites were commanded to eat the passover with their feet shod to show that they were ready for their journey. Christ commanded His messengers to be shod with sandals, that they might be ready to go and proclaim the gospel wherever they were sent. The Christian warrior is on his way through a strange and hostile country, and should be every moment not only prepared to proceed, but be every moment in actual progress, proclaiming peace on his way to the land of eternal peace. Progress in truth is made by being firmly established in its principles; every advancing step is taken with confidence and with the air of one who is assured of the ground on which he is treading. The gospel of peace establishes peace between God and man, and proclaims goodwill and peace to the universe. "The objection that the apostle is addressing the faithful at large who are not all of them called to preach the gospel is mistaken. Every believer should be prepared to witness for Christ so often as opportunity affords and needs a readiness thereto. The knowledge of Christ's peace qualifies him to convey its message. He brings it with him into the strife of the world. And it is the consciousness that he possesses himself such peace, and has it to communicate to others, which enables him to walk firmly and with sure step in the way of faith" (*Von Hofmann*). We preserve the truth by spreading it; and the best defence against the enemies of the truth is to persuade them to accept the gospel of peace. The Christian warrior is not a fighter, but a peacemaker.

4. *The shield of faith.*—"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye

shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (ver. 16). The shield signified is not the small round buckler or targe of the light-armed man, but the oblong, doorlike shield, measuring four feet by two and a half, and curved to the shape of the body, that the Greek hoplite and the Roman legionary carried. Joined together, these large shields formed a wall, behind which a body of troops could hide themselves from the rain of the enemy's missiles. These military shields were made of wood, covered on the outside with thick leather, which not only deadened the shock of the missile, but protected the frame of the shield from the fire-tipped darts used in the artillery of the ancients. So faith is the shield of the Christian soldier, defending him from the fierce attacks of the foe, from within and without. By "the fiery darts of the wicked" the apostle may allude to the darts called *falarica*, which were headed with lead, in or about which some combustible stuff was placed that took fire in the passage of the arrow through the air, and often burnt up the enemies' ships and engines, or stuck in the shields and set them on fire. The shield of faith cannot be pierced or destroyed by the fiercest fires of hatred or malice. The arrows of the wicked, flaming with cruelty, are caught on this shield, blunted, and extinguished.

5. *The helmet of salvation.*—"And take the helmet of salvation" (ver. 17). The helmet was the armour for the head, was of various forms, and embossed with a great variety of figures. On the top of the helmet was the crest or ridge, adorned with several emblematic figures, either for ornament or to strike terror. The apostle may refer to a helmet which had an emblematic representation of hope —that the person who wore it should be safe, should be prosperous in all his engagements, and escape unhurt from battle. So the hope of conquering every adversary, and surmounting every difficulty by the salvation of the gospel, is a helmet that protects the head, and is of such impenetrable texture as the blow of the battle-axe cannot cleave. The hope of continual safety and protection, built on the promises of the gospel, protects the understanding from being confused by the subtle attacks of Satan or the sophisms of unbelief. Salvation guards the whole man, the head and heart, and is both helmet and shield.

II. **He is armed with an all-potent offensive weapon.**—"And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (ver. 17). The military swords were of various sizes, and in the earliest times were made of brass. The swords of Homer's heroes were all of this metal. Great dexterity was acquired in the use of the sword, and an expert swordsman was an antagonist greatly dreaded. The word of God is the offensive weapon wielded by the Christian combatant. It is called the sword of the Spirit, because it comes from the Holy Spirit, and receives its fulfilment in the soul through the operations of the Spirit, who alone can teach its potent use. Facility in quoting the word in times of temptation and trial enables the spiritual warrior to cut in pieces the snares of the adversary. The shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit are the principal armour of the soul. The enemies of the cross of Christ fall humiliated and defeated under the powerful strokes of the Spirit's sword. There are times when the Christian soldier must not only stand on the defensive, but must lead the attack with unflinching bravery on the forces of evil. He is safe only by slaying the enemy.

III. **He is fully prepared to resist and conquer his terrible opponents.**—"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (ver. 13). *Stand* is the spiritual battle-cry. Being armed, defend your liberties, maintain your rights, discomfort your spiritual foes, hold your ground against them, never put off your armour, but be ever standing ready to repel any new attack. The defence is necessary, for the evil day is at hand, is already dawning. The early Church had its evil day of persecution and defection, and the Church of to-day is threatened

by an evil day of subtlest error. The unwary and supine will go down before the forces of evil, and only the brave and steadfast will survive.

Lessons.—1. *The Christian armour is invulnerable.* 2. *The Christian warrior must attack as well as defend.* 3. *The Christian warrior can conquer only as he uses the armour provided.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 13-17. *The Christian's Armour.*—St. Paul lay in prison at Rome, bound with a chain to the Roman trooper who watched him day and night. He employed his prison hours in writing. It was very natural that his language, like his thoughts, should be coloured here and there by the objects around him; and we find that whilst writing this circular epistle to the Ephesians his eye had actually been resting on the soldier to whom he was chained. In the outfit of the Roman legionary he saw the symbol of the supernatural dress which befits the Christian. The ornamented girdle or *balteus*, bound around the loins, to which the sword was commonly attached, seemed to the apostle to recall the inward practical acknowledgment of truth, which is the first necessity in the Christian character. The metal breastplate suggests the moral rectitude or righteousness which enables a man to confront the world. The strong military sandals spoke of the readiness to march in the cause of that gospel whose sum and substance was not war, but spiritual even more than social peace. And then the large oblong, oval, wooden shield, clothed with hides, covering well-nigh the whole body of the bearer, reminded him of Christian faith, upon which the temptations of the evil one, like the ancient arrows, tipped as they often were with inflammable substances, would light harmlessly and lose their deadly point; and then the soldier's helmet, pointing upwards to the skies, was a natural figure of Christian hope directed towards a higher and better world; and then the sword at his side, by which he won safety and victory in the day of battle, and which you will observe is the one aggressive weapon mentioned in this whole catalogue—what was it but the emblem of that word of God which wins such victories on the battle-fields of conscience, because it pierces, even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth? Thus girded, thus clad, thus shod, thus guarded, thus covered, thus armed, the Christian might well meet his foes. He was indeed more than a match for them, and might calmly await their onset.—*H. P. Liddon.*

The Whole Armour of God.

I. **Truth.**—"Having your loins girt about with truth." By truth is intended sincerity in our Christian profession, or a firm belief of and full consent to the gospel of Christ. A rational conviction of its truth, joined with a sense of its importance, is our best security against apostasy in the evil day.

II. **Righteousness.**—"And having on the breastplate of righteousness." A holy and inoffensive life will prevent many injuries. It will command the reverence of bad and the compassion of good men. It will obtain the protection of God's providence and the supports of His grace. It will preserve peace and serenity of conscience under the reproaches of a malignant world.

III. **Peace.**—"Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." This peaceable disposition is a preparation for the trials of an evil day, and an excellent defence against the asperities of our Christian path. This will go on before us to smooth the rough passages of life, or attend us to guard our feet against the sticks and

traps which our enemies cast in our way. Possessed of this disposition we shall give no offence and provoke no injuries by an insolent, overbearing behaviour.

IV. **Faith.**—"Above all, taking the shield of faith." Faith is a grace of universal influence. It is the basis of all Christian graces. It is the groundwork of all religion in the heart. Faith is a more effectual defence against the temptations of Satan and the world than the shields of the mighty against the darts and spears of their enemies.

V. **Hope.**—"And take the helmet of salvation." The hope of salvation. God brings salvation. We appropriate it by hope. We must fight the good fight of faith in hope that the Captain of salvation will support us in the conflict and lead us to victory.

VI. **Knowledge.**—"The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The divine word is called the sword of the Spirit because it is rendered effectual by the Spirit in slaying the fleshly lusts and repelling the outward temptations which war against the soul.

Reflections.—1. *We see of what importance it is that we have the power of religion in our hearts.* 2. *It concerns us to live much in the exercise of faith.* 3. *Let us exercise our courage according to the various exigencies of the Christian life.*—*Lathrop.*

The Duty of Believers in the Evil Day.

I. **The time to which the exhortation refers—the evil day.**—1. *By the evil day we are clearly to understand the season of temptation.* When "we wrestle."

2. *This evil day may be understood of life itself.*—"Few and evil have been the days of my pilgrimage." Man is tempted till his death.

3. *The evil day may refer to seasons during which temptation is peculiarly strong.*—With our first parents whilst they listened to Satan. With Christ in the wilderness—near death (John xiv. 30).

4. *Of such seasons we have many examples in Scripture.*—The lives of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Job, Lot, Samson, David, Asa, Hezekiah, Peter, Demas.

5. *Such seasons each believer can mark in his history.*—They are generally turning-points. They are attended by every variety of outward circumstances, prosperity, adversity, society, solitude, health, sickness.

6. *With the wicked such days are evil.*—Days of suffering, of danger, of backsliding, of apostasy, of dishonour to Christ, and triumph to the world and to all the enemies of Christ.

7. *This season of temptation is short.*—A day. We should not grow weary.

8. *Though it be short it is important.*—The day of battle is generally most important in its results. So in spiritual warfare. The temptation in Eden, etc.

II. **The duty which falls to be performed in the evil day.**—1. *To withstand.* (1) This has reference to Satan as an assailant. (2) It binds us to resistance, *i.e.*, to perform the duty from which Satan dissuades, to refuse the sin which he recommends, to hold fast that which we have, and to reject that which he offers in exchange (Rev. iii. 2).

2. *To proceed from the defensive to the offensive.*—"Having done all," or "conquered all." (1) The believer, as "the good soldier of Christ," is, like his Master, to be an assailant. (2) By attacking, Satan discovers himself; and the believer, having resisted, may gain an advantage. When his stronghold in the heart is found out, it may be pulled down. Is it pride? (2 Cor. x. 4, 5). (3) Satan can be contended against only by carrying on an offensive warfare—in the heart, in the world. The Romans could be conquered only in Italy.

3. *That having resisted and conquered, we still stand.*—(1) Though repulsed, Satan is not slain, his resources are not exhausted, "his wrath" continues. (2) We must therefore "stand" after victory. Our armour must be kept on.

We must be vigilant. We must be in an attitude for the fight.

III. **The preparation necessary to the performance of the peculiar duties of the evil day.**—1. *The evil day is a day of war*, and hence its duties and the kind of preparation called for.

2. *There are three things to be noticed in the account of the believer's preparation.*—(1) He must be armed—divine grace. An unarmed soldier a contradiction; he is useless for duty, exposed to death. (2) *He must be completely armed.* For defence and for offence. (3) *His armour must be that "of God."* Human virtues will not do. Human energies will not do.—*Stewart.*

Ver. 14. *The Girdle of Truth.*

I. **Honesty and truthfulness of character.**—Love of truth as being from God, hatred of lies as being from the devil—this is a primary condition of being strong in the Lord. Nothing can be more injurious to the character of the Christian religion than the suspicion that it shuns examination, that its claims are in antagonism with demonstrated truth. There is a kind of false liberalism concerning religious truth. It is easy for a man to fancy his loins are girt about with truth when the fact is they are girt about with indifference; and a person so armed may assume an attitude of impartiality with regard to religious questions because he cares nothing concerning the issue; and sometimes it seems to be assumed that a writer possesses a virtue, compensating for all vices, if he is apparently free from all bias either for or against revealed truth. The true path is taken by him who, strong in his own faith and love, fears no honest investigation, and shrinks from adopting in matters of religion any tone of thought or line of argument which he cannot justify upon the broadest grounds of calm judgment and sober reason.

II. **But the words of the apostle refer not only to truthfulness, but to truth itself, to that which we know to be true.**—It would be unworthy of an apostle if he should include under the title of truth, necessary for the protection of a Christian champion, all human knowledge which is rightly so called. Do not consider that the progress you make in human knowledge lies beside your path as Christians. As members of Christ, as His soldiers and servants, take a nobler view of your work than that. Christ has taken the elements of this world and sanctified them for Himself; there is nothing really secular but what is evil, and all that is not evil ought to be used on the side of truth.

III. **The apostle has in mind that definite form of revealed truth which in Scripture is described as emphatically the truth.**—The great doctrine of godliness, the incarnation of the eternal Son, and all those truths which flow from this one mysterious spring. While there is no antagonism between Scriptural and human knowledge, there is a wide difference between the sources from which they are derived, the evidences by which they are established, and the conditions of their being rightly apprehended. Whereas other knowledge is the slow accumulation of the experience of ages, and the result of the guesses and labours of gifted men, and is consequently an ever-growing and changing body of truth, Christian truth admits of no change and no growth. It admits of application to new circumstances; it admits too of growth, between the limits of a mustard seed and a full-grown tree, in its subjective apprehension by each believing heart; but objectively it knows neither diminution nor expansion, it is ever one and indivisible, because it resolves itself ultimately into the one great mysterious fact, the manifestation of God in human flesh. No amount of argument would ever turn religious belief into religious life, if the articles of the creed did not attest their divinity by filling up the void of the human heart and by their constraining influence on human conduct; and, on the other hand, no religion could maintain its ground and command the assent of

thinking men, unless its historical claims and its objective truth would stand the test of the severest scrutiny. The truth of Christ rests upon both grounds; and because this is so we are bound to gird it about our loins as our only sure support in our conflict with the spiritual wickedness of this world, our support in the hour of death, our support in the day of judgment.—*Harvey Goodwin.*

Truth the Girdle of the Christian.

I. **The particular grace which is here mentioned—truth.**—1. *By this exhortation we might understand that we must in all things act according to truth or what is truth.* This implies the knowledge of truth, the yielding up of ourselves to truth, so as to embody it.

2. *By the truth we may understand sincerity.*—Being in appearance what we are in reality, seeming to follow what we do follow, expressing the real thoughts and feelings of the heart. This sincerity is displayed towards God, towards our fellow-men, and towards ourselves.

II. **The uses or purposes of truth in the Christian life: it is a girdle.**—By comparing truth to a girdle the apostle suggests the purposes which it serves: 1. *The ancient girdle was meant to give firmness and strength.* 2. *To fit for activity, by binding up the loose, flowing garments.* 3. *To the girdle arms were attached.*—*Stewart.*

Ver. 15. *The Gospel of Peace.*

I. **The nature of this peace.**—1. *It is peace with God.*—A mutual reconciliation following a mutual estrangement.

2. *It is peace with ourselves.*—This includes both the silencing of the accusations of conscience and the restoration of the internal harmony of our nature.

3. *It is peace with our fellow-men.*—Between nations and classes, and families and individuals.

4. *It is peace with our fellow-Christians.*

II. **The relation of the gospel to this peace.**—1. *In the gospel it is proclaimed.* 2. *In the gospel its grounds are unfolded.* 3. *By the belief of the gospel it is conveyed.*—*G. Brooks.*

Ver. 17. *The Bible the Sword of the Spirit.*

I. **The Bible is a sword.**—1. *Like a sword, it is of no use till it is unsheathed.* The Bible must not lie idle in the library or in the intellect. Must be used.

2. *Like a sword, when it is unsheathed it cuts deeply.*—Makes deep gashes in the heart and conscience.

3. *Like a sword, it is a weapon of defence as well as of offence.*—"It is written."

II. **The Bible is the sword of the Spirit.**—1. *Because He inspired it.* Those whom we call the sacred writers were its penmen; He alone was its Author.

2. *Because He interprets it.*—Its Author is also its interpreter. Wherever it is carried He is, and in answer to the prayer of faith He expounds its true meaning as far as saving truth is concerned.

3. *Because He wields it as the instrument of His victories.*—Refer to some of the remarkable revivals, to individual conversions.

III. **Our duty with regard to the Bible as the sword of the Spirit.**—1. *Take it and study it.* Sword exercise.

2. *Take it and bind it to your heart.*—Delight in it.

3. *Take it and employ it vigorously till your life's end.*—"His sword was in His hand." "There is none like it."—*Ibid.*

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

The Programme of Prayer.

I. **Prayer should be constant and varied in its methods.**—"Praying always with all prayer and supplication" (ver. 18). The Christian warrior is armed

from head to foot with the girdle, the breastplate, the greaves, the shield, the helmet, and the sword; no weapon of defence or offence is wanting; it would seem as if nothing was needed to complete the equipment. The one essential now is the spirit and courage to fight, to use the spiritual weapons with dexterity and effect; and the power to do this is secured by prayer. Prayer should be constant; the soul should be ever in a praying mood; and supplication, earnest entreaty, should be used in the special emergencies that occur in the battle of life. "Praying always with all prayer": all kinds and methods of prayer should be employed—prayer in public aided by the sympathy and inspiration of numbers, in private when alone with God, in the family, in the whirl of business, in the stress of battle, in the intervals of recreation, in the heart without a voice and with the voice from the heart. The earnest and needy soul will find its own way of keeping up a prayerful intercourse with God. "Some there are," said Wesley, "who use only mental prayer or ejaculations, and think they are in a state of grace and use a way of worship far superior to any other; but such only fancy themselves to be above what is really above them, it requiring far more grace to be enabled to pour out a fervent and continued prayer than to offer up mental aspirations."

"Warrior, that from battle won,
Breathest now at set of sun;
Woman, o'er the lowly slain,
Weeping on his burial plain!
Ye that triumph, ye that sigh,
Kindred by one holy tie:
Heaven's first star alike ye see—
Lift the heart and bend the knee."

Hemans.

II. **Prayer is prompted and sustained by the divine Spirit.**—"Praying . . . in the Spirit" (ver. 18). The Spirit is the author and element of the believer's life in Christ. It is He who gives the grace and power to pray; He helps our infirmities, and intercedes for us and in us. Prayer is one of the highest exercises of the soul, and achieves its loftiest triumphs under the inspiration and help of the Spirit. He suggests topics for prayer, proper times and seasons, imparts urgency and perseverance in supplication, and He alone makes prayer effectual.

III. **Prayer should be accompanied with persevering vigilance.**—"Watching [keeping awake] thereunto with all perseverance and supplication" (ver. 18). We must not only watch and pray, but watch while we pray. Watch against wandering thoughts, against meaningless and insincere petitions, against the seductive suggestions of the tempter, and against the tendency to trust in our prayers or in our earnestness rather than in God, whose help we supplicate. "With all perseverance" means a sustained, unsleeping, and unresting vigilance. The word implies stretching out the neck and looking about in order to discern an enemy at a distance. Without watchfulness prayer and all the spiritual armour will be unavailing. The best-appointed army, over-confident in its strength, has suffered inglorious defeat by neglecting to watch. The wakeful and earnest suppliant must persist in prayer, undaunted by opposition and unwearied by delay.

IV. **Prayer should be offered on behalf of the Church in general.**—"For all saints" (ver. 18). Prayer that in its nature is generous and comprehensive is apt to become selfish and narrowed down into despicable limits. The man prays best for himself who prays most earnestly for others. "Prayer for ourselves must broaden out into a catholic intercession for all the servants of our Master, for all the children of the household of faith. By the bands of prayer we are knit together—a vast multitude of saints throughout the earth, unknown by face

or name to our fellows, but one in the love of Christ and in our heavenly calling and all engaged in the same perilous conflict. All the saints were interested in the faith of the Asian believers; they were called with 'all the saints' to share in the comprehension of the immense designs of God's kingdom. The dangers and temptations of the Church are equally far-reaching; they have a common origin and character in all Christian communities. Let our prayers at least be catholic. At the throne of grace, let us forget our sectarian divisions. Having access in one Spirit to the Father, let us realise in His presence our communion with all His children" (*Findlay*).

"The saints in prayer appear as one,
In word and deed and mind;
While with the Father and the Son
Sweet fellowship they find.

"Nor prayer on earth is made alone—
The Holy Spirit pleads;
And Jesus on the eternal throne
For sinners intercedes."
J. Montgomery.

V. **Prayer should be definite and special in its petitions.**—1. *For the preacher of the gospel in unfavourable circumstances.* "And for me . . . an ambassador in bonds" (vers. 19, 20). An ambassador, being the representative of his king, his person was in all civilised countries held sacred, and it was regarded as the greatest indignity and breach of faith to imprison or injure him. Contrary to the rights of nations, this ambassador of the King of heaven was put in chains. Even Paul, with all his magnificent endowments, felt the need for the prayers of God's people and craved for them. The fortunes of the gospel were bound up with his life, and he was now suffering for his courageous defence of the truth. It was of immense importance to the early Church that he should be true and faithful in this crisis, and he asks for the prayers of God's people that he may be sustained and the gospel victorious. Here was a definite and special theme for prayer. Occasions of great peril evoke the spirit of earnest supplication. It is an aid to devotion to have some one to specially pray for.

2. *For courage and facility in unfolding the mystery of the gospel he feels constrained to declare.*—"That utterance may be given unto me, that I may . . . make known the mystery of the gospel, . . . that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak [*as I must needs speak*]" (vers. 19, 20). The apostolic prisoner was more concerned about his message than his own fate. He hailed the occasion of His defence before the civil authorities as an opportunity for unfolding and enforcing the gospel, for preaching which he was now in chains. He feels the gravity of the crisis, and he is nervously anxious to do justice to his grand theme. Clear as was his insight and firm as was his grasp of the leading truths of the gospel, he invokes the prayers of the Ephesian saints that God may give him liberty and power in their exposition, and that he may win converts to the truth from the midst of his enemies. The pulpit will become a greater power if the people of God pray fervently and unitedly for the ambassadors of Christ. Prayer is more potent in winning souls than the logic and eloquence of the preacher.

Lessons.—1. *The topics for prayer are abundant and ever present.* 2. *Prayer nerves the soul with divine power.* 3. *Earnest and believing prayer will prevail.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 18-20. *Praying with all Prayer.*

I. **The apostle supposes our obligation to prayer to be so plain that every rational mind will see it, and so important that every pious heart will feel it.**—Our obligation to prayer

naturally results from our weakness and dependence and God's all-sufficiency and goodness. Desires directed to Him are prayers. To clothe our desires in language is not essential. God hears the desire of the humble. There is the same reason for daily prayer as for daily labour. Prayer is a means of enlivening our pious sentiments and exciting us to the practice of duty and thus preparing us for divine favours.

II. **Prayer is of several kinds.**—Social and secret, public and domestic, stated and occasional; and consists of several parts—confession, supplication, intercession, and thanksgiving. The apostle points out no part or kind of prayer in distinction from all others, but exhorts in general to pray with all prayer.

III. **The manner in which our prayers should be offered.**—The spirit and temper of the heart in our prayers is the main thing necessary to qualify them for God's acceptance. The first thing necessary in prayer is faith. Our desires must be good and reasonable. Attention of mind, collection of thought, and warmth of affection are qualifications required in prayer. Our prayers must be accompanied with justice to men. Charity is an essential qualification in prayer. Our prayers must be joined with a sense of and sorrow for sin, and submission to the divine will. We are to continue in prayer, and watch thereunto with all perseverance.

IV. **The apostle here teaches the duty of intercession for others.**—If God is good to others as well as to us, there is the same ground on which to offer our social intercessions as our personal petitions. We are commanded to pray for all men, and especially for all saints; this is to pray for the general virtue and happiness of the human race in this and all succeeding ages. Christians ought to pray for their minister. There was something special in Paul's case—he was an ambassador in bonds.

V. **The apostle points out the manner in which he aimed and all ministers ought to preach the gospel.**—The apostle desired to make known the mystery of the gospel, and to speak boldly. In a minister boldness is necessary; not that impudent boldness which assumes an unmerited superiority, but that pious fortitude that dares to utter the important things of religion without reserve and without fear of personal inconvenience. He must persevere in the faithful execution of his office, whatever discouragements may arise from the opposition of the world, the frowns of the great, the contempt of the proud, the want of concurrence, or the smallness of his success.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 18. *Praying in the Spirit.*

I. **The time.**—"Always." 1. *The frequent practice of prayer.* 2. *The constant cultivation of the spirit of prayer.*

II. **The manner.**—"With all prayer and supplication." 1. *The prayer of the closet.* Secret. 2. *The prayer of the family.* Domestic. 3. *The prayer of the social circle.* United. 4. *The prayer of the sanctuary.* Public.

III. **The matter.**—"With all prayer and supplication."—1. *There are thanksgivings to be rendered.* 2. *There are confessions to be made.* 3. *There are petitions to be offered.* 4. *There are intercessions to be presented.*

IV. **Spirituality.**—"In the Spirit." 1. *With our own heart.*—Not formal or mechanical. 2. *In dependence on the aid of the Holy Ghost.*

V. **The continuance.**—"With all perseverance." 1. *In the general habit.* Prayer never to be given up. 2. *In special objects.* No fainting in prayer.

VI. **The intercession.**—"And supplication for all saints." 1. *For the whole Church.* 2. *For any part of the Church that is in danger of distress.* 3. *For our own section of the Church.* 4. *For our Christian friends.*—*G. Brooks.*

The Duty of Prayer.—Prayer is the communion of the soul with God, and

the casting of itself upon Him for help and guidance.

I. **God has implanted prayer as an instinct in the hearts of men.**—In times of danger the soul instinctively cries out for God or some unseen power to interpose and save.

II. **God desires that men should pray regularly and constantly.**—Blessings are promised in answer to prayer which the soul can obtain in no other way.

III. **God commands men to pray.**—To abound in prayer and to pray without weariness and fainting.

IV. **God teaches how to pray and what to pray for.**—The Spirit helps our infirmities.

V. **There is no religious life apart from prayer.**—The Bible saints were men of prayer. At the very beginning of human history men began to call upon God. And in the visions of heaven which St. John has recorded, when the Lamb had taken the book to open its seals, the twenty-four elders fell down before Him, "having every one of them harps and golden phials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints, and they sang a new song." Prayer leads to praise.

VI. **How can we make the duty a privilege and the privilege a pleasure?**—If Christ was comforted and strengthened by prayer, can we as Christians live without it? Is not a prayerless Christian in danger of being no Christian at all?—*Homiletic Monthly.*

Vers. 19, 20. *A Picture of Moral Bravery.*

I. **An ambassador charged with a message of world-wide significance and importance.**—"To make known the mystery of the gospel" (ver. 19).

II. **An ambassador, contrary to the law of nations, imprisoned because of his message.**—"For which I am an ambassador in bonds" (ver. 20).

III. **An ambassador irresistibly constrained to declare the message for which he suffers.**—"That therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak" (ver. 20).

IV. **An ambassador imploring, not the sanction of civil authorities, but the prayers of God's people that he may be emboldened to discharge his high commission.**—"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly" (ver. 19).

Ver. 19. *The Gospel a Mystery.*

I. **Because it is known only by divine revelation.**—Such a secret it is that the wit of man could never have found out. As none but God could lay the plot, so none but Himself could make it known.

II. **Because when revealed its truths exceed the grasp of human understanding.**—They are to the eye of our reason as the sun to the eye of our body, that dazzles and overpowers. They disdain to be discussed and tried by human reason that there are three subsistences in the Godhead and but one divine essence. We believe, because they are revealed. God and man united in Christ's person is undeniably demonstrable from the gospel, but the cordage of our understanding is too short to fathom this great deep. "Would'st thou see a reason," said Augustine, "for all that God says? Look into thine own understanding, and thou wilt find a reason why thou seest not a reason."

III. **The gospel is a mystery in regard of the kind of knowledge the saints themselves have of it.**—1. *Their knowledge is but in part, and imperfect.*—The most of what they know is the least of what they do not know. The gospel is a rich piece of arras rolled up: this God has been unfolding ever since the first promise was made to Adam, opening it every age wider than the other.

2. *It is mysterious and dark.*—Gospel truths are not known in their native beauty and glory, but in shadows. Our apprehension of things are manly compared with those under the law, but childish compared with the knowledge of glorified saints.

IV. **The gospel is a mystery in regard to the rare and strange effects**

it has upon the godly.—It enables them to believe strange mysteries—to believe that which they understand not, and hope for that which they do not see. It enables them to do as strange things as they believe—to live by another's spirit, to act from another's strength, to live by another's will, and aim at another's glory. It makes them so meek and gentle that a child may lead them to anything good, yet so stout that fire and faggot shall not fright them into sin. They are taught that all things are theirs, yet they dare not take a penny, a pin, from the wicked by force and rapine. They can pray for life, and at the same time desire to die.—*Gurnall.*

Ver. 20. *Boldness a Duty in a Minister.*

I. **The nature of the boldness desired.**—1. *To speak all he has in command from God to deliver.* 2. *To speak with liberty and freedom of spirit, without fear or bondage to any.* Speaking openly and plainly.

II. **Boldness to be shown in preaching the gospel.**—1. *In asserting the truth of the gospel.* 2. *In reproving sin and denouncing judgment against impenitent sinners.*

III. **The kind of boldness a minister should cultivate.**—1. *A convincing boldness.* 2. *A meek boldness.* 3. *A zealous boldness.*

IV. **The means of procuring ministerial boldness.**—1. *A holy fear of God.* 2. *Castle thyself within the power and promise of God for assistance and protection.* 3. *Keep a clear conscience.* 4. *Consider that which thou most fearest is best prevented by freedom and boldness in thy ministry.* 5. *Consider how bold Christ was in His ministry.* What greater incentive to valour can the soldier have than to see his general stand with undaunted courage where the bullets fly thickest! Such valiant captains do not breed white-livered soldiers. It is impossible we should be dastardly, if instructed by Him and actuated by His Spirit.—*Ibid.*

Ver 20. *The Gospel Ambassador.*

I. **The dignity of his office.**—Seen: 1. *In the majesty of the Prince from whom he comes.* 2. *In the greatness of the Person whose place he supplies.* 3. *In the excellency of the message he brings.*

II. **How the duty of his office should be discharged.**—1. *Stain not the dignity of thy office by any base, unworthy practices.* 2. *Keep close to thy instructions.* 3. *Think it not enough that thou deliverest thy message from God, but show a zeal for thy Master whose cause thou negotiatest.* 4. *Let not any person or thing in the world bribe or scare thee from a faithful discharge of thy trust.* 5. *Be kind to and tenderly careful of thy fellow-subjects.*—*Ibid.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 21, 22

A Trusted Messenger—

I. **Commended for his acknowledged Christian character.**—"Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord" (ver. 21). These are high and honourable designations, and indicate the genuine esteem in which he was held by the apostle. He had become endeared to Paul by the many valuable services he had rendered to him, and by the marked fidelity of his ministerial work. He appears to have joined St. Paul's staff, and remained with him from the time he accompanied him to Jerusalem in the year 59. He was sent to Ephesus to relieve Timothy when Paul desired the presence of the latter at Rome. He was well known to the Asian Church, and every way qualified to discharge the mission with which he was entrusted. He was "the beloved brother" in his relation to the Church in general, and the "faithful minister in the Lord" in his special relation to the apostle. It is better to be loved than to be simply popular. Genuine piety forms character, and commands the confidence and respect of all lovers of the truth.

II. **Entrusted with personal details of special interest.**—"Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs" (ver. 22). There were probably some details about St. Paul's imprisonment that could be communicated better in person than by letter, and certain allusions in the letter that could be more fully explained in a personal interview. Every item about Paul was of intense interest to the Asian Churches. Many of the members had been brought to Christ through his instrumentality. They were alarmed as to his fate and as to the future of the gospel. They were anxious to know if there was any prospect of his release and of his return to his missionary labours. Tychicus, enjoying the full confidence of the apostle and the affection of the people, was just the man to give them the information they so eagerly desired, and would be cordially welcomed everywhere. The trusted messenger of a great and good man is regarded for the time being with the reverence and respect cherished towards the man he represents and of whose affairs he is empowered to speak.

III. **Competent to minister encouragement.**—"That he might comfort your hearts" (ver. 22). Tychicus was not only a newsman and letter-carrier, but also a minister of Christ. He knew how to present his message so as to allay the fears of his hearers, to comfort their hearts, and to encourage their faith in the power and triumph of the gospel, notwithstanding the sufferings of its preachers. The gospel is full of consolation, and it should be the constant aim of the minister to make it known and apply it to the circumstances of his people. A diligent pastor in his visitations comes in contact with much suffering and sorrow, and has many opportunities of administering the balm of gospel comfort. Great tact and sympathy are necessary, especially in visiting the sick. Referring to this, a godly and experienced minister said, "Tenderness is essential. Enter the chamber gently. Tread noiselessly. Get near to the sufferer. Speak as softly as may be. Remember his nerves; noise is often torture. Sympathise with his weakness, restlessness, and pain. True you are not come to minister to his body; but enter into his sufferings and symptoms. Ask what his doctor has said. Avoid a professional, official, conventional air. The case may be too grave for cheerful words; but if otherwise, let your face carry a little sunshine into the sick-room. Avoid fussiness. Go with a brother's heart. Be brief—brief in your talk, brief in your readings, brief in your prayers—your whole visit brief. Take up one point. A sick man's brain is soon overtasked, his nerves soon jar, his strength soon fails. Let your good-bye be 'God bless you.' Let your last look be one of tenderness and love. Whatever you are in the pulpit, Barnabas, not Boanerges, is your pattern by the sick-bed." It is the privilege and mission of every minister and believer to be a messenger of comfort and strength to those in trouble. We shall be remembered for our kindness when many of our sermons are forgotten.

Lessons.—1. *The character of the good is self-evident.* 2. *A good man should be trusted and honoured.* 3. *The value of a good man is recognised in times of stress and difficulty.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 21, 22. *Apostolical Care for the Church.*

I. **Paul was careful to keep up an intercourse and communion with the Churches of Christ.**—There ought to be fellowship and correspondence among the Churches. They should all unite their endeavours for the common edification and comfort. The Church of Christ is one. We should seek the counsel of sister Churches under our difficulties, and be ready when requested to afford them our counsel under theirs.

II. **Paul was solicitous that the Christians among whom he had preached should know of his condition and doings.**—He was a prisoner, but suffered not his time to pass in restless impatience or useless indolence. He received all who came to him and preached to them the kingdom of God. He instructed his fellow-prisoners. He spent much of his time in prayer. Several of his epistles were written when he was in bonds. Paul's example teaches us that we should do good in every condition.

III. **When Paul sends Tychicus he gives him written testimonials that he might be received in the character of a minister.**—This precaution was taken that the Churches might not be imposed upon by ignorant pretenders or artful deceivers. The Church is a regular, organised community. We are to receive none as ambassadors of Christ but those who come to us according to the order He has settled. Ministers ought to act in concert and unite their labours in building up the kingdom of Christ. Tychicus co-operated with Paul.

IV. **Fidelity is an essential part of the ministerial character.**—Paul calls Tychicus "a faithful minister." Such a minister undertakes his work with pure intentions and abides in it with constancy, even though he may meet with worldly discouragements. Tychicus was sent to comfort the Ephesians under their grief for Paul's imprisonment, and to guard them against any discouraging apprehensions. Ministers are to strengthen new converts and young professors to constancy and perseverance in religion by laying before them the comforting and animating motives of the gospel.—*Lathrop.*

A Faithful Minister.—1. It concerns Christians to inform themselves of the life and way of eminent men in the Church, and chiefly of those who have been sufferers for truth, that they may be incited to sympathise with them, to follow their example, and bless the Lord on their behalf. 2. It is in a singular manner required of a minister that he be faithful—diligent in his work, sincere in his aims and endeavours, neither adding nor paring what God has committed unto him to speak. 3. We should labour so to inform ourselves of the case and carriage of others and how it goes with the affairs of Christ's kingdom elsewhere as to draw spiritual edification thence. 4. To know God's gracious providence towards His suffering servants, together with their undaunted courage under sufferings and the use God makes of their sufferings to advance His truth, is sufficient ground of comfort and encouragement to God's people.—*Fergusson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 23, 24.

A Suggestive Benediction—

I. **Recognises the divine source of all blessing.**—"From God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 23). All our blessings are divine, and flow from the inexhaustible fountain of the divine beneficence. "God the Father," in the eternal counsels of His wisdom and love, "and the Lord Jesus Christ," who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself as an atonement for human sin—the glorious Trinity of Persons in the Godhead—contribute from their combined perfections the spiritual good that enriches every believing soul. "The God of Christians," says Pascal, "is not barely the Author of geometrical truths, or of the order of the elements—this is the divinity of the heathen; nor barely the providential Disposer of the lives and fortunes of men, so as to crown His worshippers with a happy series of years—this is the portion of the Jews. But the God of Abraham and of Jacob, the God of Christians, is a God of love and of consolation; a God who fills the heart and the soul where He resides; a God

who gives them a deep and inward feeling of their own misery and of His infinite mercy, unites Himself to their spirit, replenishes it with humility and joy, with affiance and love, and renders them incapable of any end but Himself." The religious character of the Lancashire people was illustrated by an incident that happened towards the close of the cotton famine. The mills in one village had been stopped for months, and the first waggon-load of cotton that arrived seemed to them like the olive branch that told of the abating waters of the deluge. The waggon was met by the women, who hysterically laughed and cried and hugged the cotton bales as if they were dear old friends, and then ended by singing that grand old hymn, "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow."

II. **Implores specific blessings upon Christian brethren.**—"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith" (ver. 23). Where there is no love there is no peace, and peace and love without faith are capricious and worthless. Love is the strength of the forbearance and self-suppression so essential to the maintenance of peace. As faith grows and intensifies it opens up new channels in which love can flow. We are to contend for the faith, not that peace may be disturbed, but that it may rest on a firmer and more permanent basis. What greater boon can we desiderate for our brethren than that they may abound in "peace and love with faith"?

III. **Greets with expansive generosity all genuine lovers of Christ.**—"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen" (ver. 24). The overflow of divine grace submerges the barriers of sects and effaces the distinctions of a selfish and pretentious bigotry. Sincere love to Christ opens the heart to the richest endowments of grace, and blends all hearts that glow with a kindred affection. If we love Christ, we love one another, we love His work, His word, and are eager to obey Him in all things He commands. We may not agree in a uniformity of creeds, but we reach a higher union when our hearts are mingled in the capacious alembic of a Christ-like love. The benediction of grace to all who love Jesus is answered and confirmed by an appropriate *Amen*. "Amen" under the law was answered to the curses, but not to the blessings (Deut. xxvii. 15-26). Every particular curse must have an "Amen." But in the next chapter, where the blessings follow, there is no "Amen" affixed to them (Deut. xxviii. 2-12). But it is otherwise in the gospel. To the blessings there is an "Amen," but not to the curses. If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. xvi. 22)—a fearful curse; but there is no "Amen" to that. "Grace be with all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity": there is an "Amen" to that.

Lessons.—1. *Christianity is freighted with blessings for the race.* 2. *It has special blessings for present need.* 3. *It points men to God as the true source of all blessing.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 23. *Elements of Religious Comfort.*—The apostle prays that, with faith, there may be peace and love.

I. **Faith captivates the soul into obedience to the gospel** by giving efficacy to its precepts, examples, and doctrines. Where faith operates, love will appear, and peace will follow.

II. **Love produces peace.**—1. *Inward peace.* It extinguishes malice, envy, hatred, wrath, revenge, every unfriendly passion.

2. *Social peace.*—Christians will be careful not to give offence, either by real injuries or unnecessary differences. They will be slow to take offence.

III. **Love brings religious comfort.**—Love is comfortable in its immediate feelings and in its pacific influence. It brings comfort to the soul as it is

an evidence of godly sincerity. If we would enjoy the comfort, we must maintain the comfort of religion.—*Lathrop.*

Ver. 24. *The Christian's Truest Test and Excellence.*—Other things may be required to complete the character of the Christian; but without love to Christ there can be no Christian at all. It is the master-spirit which must animate and enliven the whole combination; and in whomsoever this spirit prevails we are entitled and enjoined to welcome that person as a disciple.

I. **Consider the love of Christ as a duty we owe to Himself.**—1. *Bring to your remembrance His personal excellences.* 2. *Consider the great and glorious object of all He did and endured—the everlasting happiness of human souls.*

II. **Consider the love of Christ as a principle which works in ourselves.**—1. *It does not destroy natural affections, but teaches us to fix them on proper objects and to give a right direction to their fullest energies.* 2. *A due sense of the Saviour's love makes us feel at once that He merits all our best affections in return.* 3. *It gives delight in meditating on the precepts and promises of God's word.* 4. *It helps in all the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures.* 5. *It animates the soul in the hour of death and the prospect of eternity.*—*J. Brewster.*

Loving Christ in Sincerity.

I. **On what account Christ is entitled to our love.**—1. *He is a divine person.* 2. *He was manifest in the flesh.* In the man Christ Jesus appeared every virtuous quality which can dignify and adorn human nature. 3. *His mediatorial offices entitle Him to our love.* 4. *He is an object of our love because of His kindness to us.*

II. **An essential qualification of love to Christ is sincerity.**—1. *Our love to Christ must be real, not pretended.* 2. *Must be universal.* It must respect His whole character. 3. *Sincere love to Christ is supreme.* It gives Him the preference to all earthly interest and connections. 4. *It is persevering.* 5. *It is active.*

III. **How sincere love to Christ will discover itself.**—1. *It will make us careful to please Him.* 2. *Will be accompanied with humility.* 3. *We shall be fond of imitating Him.* 4. *We shall promote His interest and oppose His enemies.* 5. *We shall do good to His needy brethren and friends.*

IV. **The benediction connected with this temper.**—It is called grace. It comprehends all the blessings the gospel reveals and promises. 1. *Justification before God.* 2. *The presence of the divine Spirit.* 3. *Free access to the throne of grace.* 4. *The gift of a happy immortality.*—*Lathrop.*

Love to Christ.—What is it that constitutes Christ's claim to love and respect? What is it that is to be loved in Christ? Why are we to hold Him dear? There is but one ground for virtuous affection in the universe, but one object worthy of cherished and enduring love in heaven and in earth, and that is—moral goodness. My principle applies to all beings, to the Creator as well as to His creatures. The claim of God to the love of His rational offspring rests on the rectitude and benevolence of His will. It is the moral beauty and grandeur of His character to which alone we are bound to pay homage. The only power which can and ought to be loved is a beneficent and righteous power. The ground of love to Christ is, His spotless purity, His moral perfection, His unrivalled goodness. It is the spirit of His religion, which is the Spirit of God, dwelling in Him without measure. Of consequence, to love Christ is to love the perfection of virtue, of righteousness, of benevolence; and the great excellence of this love is, that by cherishing it we imbibe, we strengthen in our own souls the most illustrious virtue, and through Jesus become like God. I call you to love Jesus that you may bring yourselves into contact and communion with perfect virtue,

and may become what you love. I know no sincere, enduring good but the moral excellence which shines forth in Jesus Christ.—*Channing.*

The Apostolic Benediction.

I. **The subjects of the benediction.**—"All them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

1. *The object of their love.*—"The Lord Jesus Christ."

2. *The character of their love.*—They love in sincerity. This proved by the effects it produces. (1) Love to God's word. (2) Prompt obedience to Christ's precepts. (3) Brotherly love. (4) Zeal for God's house.

II. **The nature of the benediction.**—1. *The prayer embraces the communication of divine grace.* 2. *All Christians need the grace of God.* (1) In all trials peculiar to the age in which they live. (2) In time of temptation and spiritual darkness. (3) In the discharge of Christian duties. (4) To sanctify, refine, and make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Lessons.—1. *Imitate the catholicity of the apostle.* 2. *Sectarian bigotry and hostility should cease.* 3. *How perilous the state of those who love not Christ.*—*Pulpit Themes.*

THE
EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

Philippi and the Philippians.—It was a moment fraught with very far-reaching issues when at Alexandria Troas St. Paul seemed to see, in a night-vision, a man standing on the beach over the head of the Ægean Sea eagerly calling for help, as a herald might summon a general to the relief of a hard-pressed garrison.

There may be cold psychological explanations of the vision which leave little scope for any divine call to evangelise them of Macedonia; but the event proved the indication of the will of God in the visionary call. In the prompt and undoubting obedience of St. Paul and his co-workers our own continent first received the glad tidings of great joy. Gliding out of the harbour of Troas, their little vessel ran before the wind as far as the island of Samothracia, and next day, rounding the island of Thasos, dropped anchor at Neapolis, the port of Philippi. But Philippi itself is still three leagues distant, on the other side of a mountain range, over which the great highway between the two continents passes. Following this great road—the Via Egnatia—the colony founded by Cæsar Augustus, and named Colonia Augusta Julia Philippensis, was the first city reached. The place had been recognised by Philip of Macedon as a gateway to be watched and strongly guarded, and when St. Paul visited it he found it bearing all the marks of a strong military centre—a sort of ganglion in the great system of which Rome was the brain. To remember this is to receive light on certain expressions in the epistle; for even though "not many mighty are called," they may serve to illustrate a service whose weapons are "not carnal but spiritual."

If we follow the R.V. in Acts xvi. 13—we suppose there was a place of prayer—the inference is that the Jews were not numerous in Philippi, and that it was only by a knowledge of the ancestral custom which led them to place their oratory by the water-side that St. Paul discovered the obscure company. Even when discovered there is no evidence of that virulent Judaism which so greatly

embittered the apostle's life and frustrated his missionary endeavours; and it may be that its absence explains the cordial relations between the Philippians and St. Paul.

Bishop Lightfoot notes the heterogeneous character of the first converts at Philippi. As to race, an Asiatic, a Greek, and a Roman. As to everyday life, the first is engaged in an important and lucrative branch of traffic; the second is employed to trade on the credulity of the ignorant; the third is an under-official of the government. As to religious training, one represents the speculative mystic temper of Oriental devotion; the second a low form of an artistic and imaginative religion; whilst the third represents a type of worship essentially political in tone.

It is noteworthy and prophetic that women should be so closely connected with the introduction of the gospel to Europe; and this may account for the fact that in Philippi whole families were gathered into the fold of the Church.

Thus humbly began the work of the evangelisation of a new continent, amidst brutal bodily assaults and indignities heaped upon its heralds. Here commenced, some ten years before the date of our epistle, a friendship, unbroken through those years, with Timothy, a youth of exemplary ability and piety.

Place and time of writing the epistle.—Though Cæsarea has found favour with some scholars as the *place* from which the epistle originated, by far the greater number accept Rome. Indeed, we may almost say we are shut up to this by ancient and modern opinions. Even though we may admit that the subscription of the epistle in the A.V., as in general, is not worthy of any special consideration as being authoritative, yet it agrees in this case with the preponderant opinion.

It is the most natural interpretation of the expression in iv. 32, "they of Cæsar's household," which is decisive of Rome. The phrase in i. 13, "throughout the whole prætorian guard" (R.V.), is not absolutely conclusive for Rome, for the word "prætorium" is used of Herod's palace at Cæsarea, and "is the standing appellation for the palaces of the chief governors of *provinces*" (Meyer). Still, as Lightfoot argues, to apply it to Cæsarea in this case does not suit the context.

As to the *time* of writing, there is nothing like the same consent of opinion. But the difference of opinion is limited to the confinement of the apostle at Rome (on which see Acts xxviii. 30). The discussion is as to whether it was early or late in that two years' captivity that the letter was written.

For the later date the arguments are: 1. That it must have taken some considerable time before St. Paul's religion could be so widely known as this letter indicates it was. 2. That Luke and Aristarchus are not mentioned here, as in Colossians and Philemon, the inference being that they had left the apostle. 3. That the communications between Rome and Philippi would necessitate a considerable interval after St. Paul's arrival in Rome. 4. That the tone of the apostle agrees better with a prolonged captivity.

Amongst English scholars, Ellicott, Alford, and others favour the later date On the other side are Lightfoot and Beet.

Occasion and contents of the epistle.—Godet remarks that, as Philemon shows us the apostle's way of requesting a favour, Philippians is a specimen of how he returned thanks. The Church which was the "crown and joy" of the apostle had sent into his captivity a token of their loving remembrance by the hand of Epaphroditus. The messenger had been overtaken by alarming illness, and after hearing that his friends in Philippi were anxious about him, he was despatched homewards bearing the apostle's expressions of gratitude—not so much for the money gift as the genuine attachment which prompted it.

No epistle is so truly a letter, of all we have from St. Paul's pen, as this to the Philippians. The arrangement is less formal; we miss the chains of reasoning and quotation from the Old Testament. As Meyer says: "Not one [of his epistles] is so eminently an epistle of the feelings, an outburst of the moment, springing from the deepest inward need of loving fellowship amidst outward abandonment and tribulation; a model, withal, of the union of tender love and at times an almost elegiac impress of courageous resignation in the prospect of death, with high apostolic dignity and unbroken holy joy, hope, and victory over the world."

A brief synopsis of the letter may be shown thus :—

i. 1—11. Greeting of, thanksgiving, and prayer for the Philippians.
12—26. Personal affairs of the apostle (so ii. 19-30).
i. 27—ii. 1—11. Exhortation to humility after the supreme Example.
iii. 1—21. Warning against the vain work-righteousness of Judaism.
iv. 1—9. Exhortations to unity, to Christian joy, and Christian graces.
10—19. Renewed thanksgiving for the generosity shown.
20—23. Doxology and salutations.

CHAPTER I.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ.**—There is no necessity for Paul to mention his apostolate, inasmuch as the Philippians had never even thought of calling it in question. "Paul an apostle and Timothy a servant" was a distinction too invidious for Paul to make. There is a fine aroma of courtesy in what is not said as well as in what is said here. **Bishops and deacons.**—"It is incredible that St. Paul should recognise only the bishops and deacons (if 'presbyters' were a different order from 'bishops'). It seems therefore to follow of necessity that the 'bishops' were identical with the 'presbyters'" (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 3. **I thank my God.**—The keynote of the whole epistle. As the apostle's strains of praise had been heard by the prisoners in the Philippian gaol, so now from another captivity the Church hears a song of sweet contentment. "*My* God." The personal appropriation and the quiet contentment of the apostle both speak in this emphatic phrase.

Ver. 4. **Always in every prayer of mine for you all.**—Notice the comprehensive "always," "every," "all," indicating special attachment to the Philippians. **With joy.**—The sum of the epistle is, "I rejoice. . . . Rejoice ye." "He recalls to our minds the runner who at the supreme moment of Grecian history brought to Athens the news of Marathon. Worn, panting, exhausted with the effort to be the herald of deliverance, he sank in death on the threshold of the first house which he reached with the tidings of victory, and sighed forth his gallant soul in one great sob, almost in the very same words as those used by the apostle, 'Rejoice ye; we rejoice'" (*Farrar*, after Lightfoot).

Ver. 5. "**Fellowship** here denotes co-operation in the widest sense, their participation with the apostle, whether in sympathy or in suffering, or in active labour, or in any other way. At the same time, their almsgiving was a signal instance of this co-operation, and seems to have been foremost in the apostle's mind" (*Lightfoot*). **He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it.**—"The observation of the ebb and flow of the tide for so many days and months and ages together, as it has been observed by mankind, gives us a full assurance that it will ebb and flow again to-morrow" (*Bishop Butler*). Another sort of assurance comes in here. It is an offence to every worthy thought of God that He should begin and not be able to finish (Isa. xxvi. 12).

Ver. 7. **Meet for me to think this.**—"To form this opinion." That the apostle cherished a warm affection for these Philippians would have been, if alone, a very flimsy foundation for hopes so substantial. Was not Judas cherished in a warmer heart than Paul's? But their sympathy and active co-operation made such an opinion not a pious hope, but a reasonable likelihood. **Defence and confirmation.**—The "defence" (ἀπολογία) is the clearing away of objections—the preparation of the ground; the "confirmation" is the positive settlement on the ground so prepared. "The two together will thus comprise all modes of preaching and extending the truth" (*Lightfoot*). **Partakers of my grace.**—The *grace* whether of preaching or of suffering for the gospel. See ver. 29, where "given" requires the addition "as a favour." "You are privileged . . . to suffer."

Ver. 8. **God is my record.**—As in Rom. i. 9. When we feel language too weak to bear our impassioned feeling, it may be well to remember the "Yea, yea" of the Master rather than copy this oath. **In the bowels of Jesus Christ.**—R.V. "in the tender mercies." This is quite an Eastern form of expression. Among the Malays a term of endearment is "my liver"; we choose the heart as the seat of the affections. For the figure, cf. Gal. ii. 20.

Ver. 9. **In knowledge and in all judgment.**—"Perfect knowledge (as in Eph. i. 17, iv. 13) and universal discernment." "The one deals with general principles, the other is concerned with practical applications" (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 10. **That ye may approve things that are excellent.**—St. Paul would have his dear Philippians to be connoisseurs of whatever is morally and spiritually excellent. **That ye may be sincere.**—Bearing a close scrutiny, in the strongest light, or according to another derivation of the word, perhaps more true if less beautiful, made pure by sifting. **And without offence.**—Might be either "without stumbling," as Acts xxiv. 16, or "not causing offence. Lightfoot prefers the former, Meyer the latter. Beet unites the two.

Ver. 11. **Fruits of righteousness.**—"A harvest of righteousness." **Which are through Jesus Christ.**—A more precise definition of "fruits."

Ver. 12. **The things which happened unto me.**—Precisely the same phrase as in Eph. vi. 21; is translated "my affairs" (so Col. iv. 7). These circumstances were such as naturally would fill the friends of the apostle with concern for him personally. As to the effect on the spread of the gospel—ever St. Paul's chief solicitude—they had been apprehensive. **Rather unto the furtherance.**—Not to the *hindrance*, as to your fears seemed likely. It is the same triumphant note which rises, in a later imprisonment, above personal indignity and suffering. "*I* may be bound, the message I bear is at liberty" (2 Tim. ii. 9).

Ver. 13. **Bonds in Christ are manifest.**—R.V. "bonds became manifest in Christ." It is not simply as a private prisoner that he is bound; it is matter of public note that he is bound for Christ's sake. **In all the palace.**—R.V. text, "throughout the whole prætorian guard." R.V. margin, "in the whole prætorium." "The best supported meaning of 'prætorium' is—*the soldiers* composing the imperial regiments" (*Lightfoot*). "*The barracks* of the imperial body-guard" to whose "colonel" Paul was given in charge on his arrival in Rome (Acts xxviii. 16)" (*Meyer*). "As the soldiers would relieve guard in constant succession, the prætorians one by one were brought into communication with 'the prisoner of Jesus Christ'" (*Lightfoot*). **In all other places.**—The italicised places of the A.V. text must be dropped; the margin is better. A loose way of saying "to others besides the military."

Ver. 14. **Confident by my bonds.**—The bonds might have been thought to be sufficient to intimidate the brethren; but the policy of stamping out has oftener resulted in spreading the gospel.

Ver. 15. **Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife.**—Not some of the brethren emboldened by the apostle's chain, perhaps, although one sees no reason why the Judaisers would not, with redoubled energy, spread their views when he whom they so violently opposed was for the time being silenced, as they imagined. "*Of envy.*" Lightfoot refers to the saying of the comic poet Philemon with its play on the word, "Thou teachest me many things ungrudgingly because of a grudge" (on account of envy). The glaring inconsistency of preaching a gospel of goodwill from such a motive as envy, the worst form of ill-will, must be closely observed here.

Vers. 16, 17.—These verses are transposed in R.V.; the order of the A.V. is against decisive testimony (*Meyer*).

Ver. 16. **To add affliction to my bonds.**—"To make my chains gall me," Lightfoot strikingly translates. One can almost imagine St. Paul starting up, and straining at the wrist of the soldier to whom he was chained, as he hears of the intrigues of a party whose one object it was to impose an effete ritual on men called to liberty in Christ.

Ver. 17. **For the defence of the gospel.**—Many a man in the apostle's place would have found himself absorbed by the question how best to make a good defence of himself.

Ver. 18. **Whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached.**—St. Paul evidently thinks the imperfect knowledge of Christ preferable to heathen ignorance of Him. The truth is mighty enough to take care of itself, without any hand that shakes with nervous apprehension to steady its ark. St. Paul is beforehand with our method of keeping a subject before the notice of the public. The policy of "never mentioning" was what St. Paul regarded as fatal.

Ver. 19. **This shall turn to my salvation.**—"*Salvation* in the highest sense. These trials will develop the spiritual life in the apostle, will be a pathway to the glories of heaven' (*Lightfoot*). Meyer prefers to render "will be *salutary* for me, without any more precise modal definition." **Supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.**—"The Spirit of Jesus is both the giver and the gift" (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 20. **Earnest expectation.**—Same word again in Rom. viii. 19 (not again in New Testament). "It is the waiting expectation that continues on the strain till the goal is attained" (*Meyer*). The intensive in the compound word implies abstraction from other things through intentness on one. **Put to shame.**—As a man might be who felt his cause not worth pleading, or as one overawed by an august presence. **With all boldness,** *i.e.* of speech. A man overpowered by shame loses the power of speech (see Matt. xxii. 12).

Ver. 21. **For to me to live is Christ.**—The word of emphasis is *to me*, whatever it may be to others. If this be not the finest specimen of a surrendered soul, one may seek long for that which excels it. That life should be intolerable, nay inconceivable, except as the ego merges into Christ's; this is the sanest and most blessed *unio mystica* (Gal. ii. 20). **And to die is gain.**—It is the purely personal view—"to me"—which the apostle has before him. "The spirit that denies" says, that when all that a man hath has been bartered for life, he will think himself gainer. "More life and fuller" is what St. Paul sees through the sombre corridor. It is not simply the oblivious repose where "the wicked cease from troubling" that he yearns for. Nor is it a philosophical Nirvâna.

> "For who to dumb forgetfulness a prey
> This pleasing, anxious being e'er resigned?"

Ver. 22. **But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour** (see R.V.).—"The grammar of the passage reflects the conflict of feeling in the apostle's mind. He is tossed to and fro between the desire to labour for Christ in life and the desire to be united with Christ by death. The abrupt and disjointed sentences express this hesitation" (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 23. **I am in a strait betwixt two.**—I am laid hold of by two forces drawing in opposite directions. "Desire" draws me away from earth; your "necessity" would keep me in it. As in the old mythology everything bowed before Necessity (ἀνάγκη), so here the apostle's desire is held in check by the needs of his converts. **To depart.**—As a ship weighs anchor and glides out with set sails, or as a tent is struck by the Arabs as they noiselessly steal away. **To be with Christ.**—St. Paul regards the soul, whilst in the body, as a "settler" in a land of which he is not a native, an "emigrant" from other shores. But he would rather emigrate from the land of his sojourn and settle with the Lord (2 Cor. v. 6, 8). "We come from God who is our home." "As soon as I shall have taken the poison I shall stay no longer with you, but shall part from hence, and go to enjoy the felicity of the blessed" (*Socrates* to Crito). **Which is far better.**—R.V. "very far." How far from uncertainty is the eager estimate of the life with Christ! It is one thing to extol the superiority of life away from the flesh in a Christian hymn, whilst health is robust; it is quite a different matter to covet it with the sword of martyrdom hanging over one's head.

Ver. 25. **I know that I shall abide.**—Not a prophetic inspiration, but a personal conviction (Acts xx. 25).

Ver. 27. **Your conversation.**—R.V. "manner of life." Margin, "behave as citizens." Perform your duties as citizens. St. Paul in Philippi, by the assertion of his Roman citizenship, had brought the prætors to their knees (Acts xvi. 37, 38), and is addressing men who could fully appreciate the honour of the *jus Italicum* conferred by Cæsar Augustus on their city. He would have them be mindful of their place in the kingdom which "cometh not with observation." **Whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear.**—The question arises whether St. Paul meant to say if he visited them, they themselves would inform him of the condition of the Church; or whether he meant he would see for himself if he went, and if not at least he would hear. As he is actually distant, the idea of hearing is uppermost, and so we have "I may hear" where we might have expected "I shall learn."

Ver. 28. **In nothing terrified.**—The phrase is a continuation of the idea of the amphitheatre in ver. 27 ("striving together"). We must, it seems, recognise a double metaphor—behaving in the arena, before antagonists and spectators, like a horse that takes fright and bolts. The warning against such unworthy conduct might be rendered—

"In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb driven cattle,
Be a hero in the strife."

Which is to them an evident token of perdition.—When once they have discovered that all their artifices have not the least power to alarm you, will not this be a clear indication that they fight on behalf of a failing cause? **But to you of salvation, and that of God.**—The Christian gladiator does not anxiously await the signal of life or death from the fickle crowd. The great President of the contest Himself has given him a sure token of deliverance (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 29. **It is given in the behalf of Christ.**—God has granted you the high privilege of suffering for Christ; this is the surest sign that He looks upon you with favour (*Ibid.*). The veterans in Philippi would understand well enough that a position involving personal danger might be a mark of favour from the prefect to the private soldier.

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

Christian Greeting—

I. **Addressed to a fully organised Church.**—"To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (ver. 1). Christianity, which began with the quiet meetings in the humble Jewish proseucha, or oratory, by the river-side, had so far spread in Philippi as to settle down into a stable and permanent Church organisation. This is the first instance in which bishops and deacons are mentioned, and specially addressed in the apostolic salutation. The former are sometimes called elders, presbyters, rulers, or presidents, and were empowered to take the oversight of the whole Church, to instruct, exhort, and rule the members; the latter were chosen to take care of the poor, and to manage the finances of the Church. The bishops attended to the internal, the

deacons to the external affairs of the Christian community. The title presbyter implied the rank, the bishop the duties of the office. As the apostles by their frequent absence were unable to take the personal oversight of the Churches they founded, they appointed officers in each Church. As the Churches multiplied, and the Church-life developed, the organisation became more compact and complete. It is noticeable in this instance that the apostle addresses the whole Church more than its presiding ministers. It should be ever remembered that the minister exists for the Church, not the Church for the minister. The clergy are not the Church, but, under God, the servants and religious guides of the people. The Christian Church is the glory and stability of a nation. When at Brussels Lord Chesterfield was invited by Voltaire to sup with him and Madame C——. The conversation happening to turn upon the affairs of England, "I think, my lord," said Madame C——, "that the Parliament of England consists of five or six hundred of the best-informed men of the kingdom?" "True, madame, they are generally supposed to be so." "What, then, can be the reason they tolerate so great an absurdity as the Christian religion?" "I suppose, madame," replied his lordship, "it is because they have not been able to substitute anything better in its stead; when they can, I do not doubt but in their wisdom they will readily adopt it."

II. **Valued as emanating from distinguished Christian pioneers.**—"Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ" (ver. 1). The significance and worth of a salutation depend upon the character and reputation of those from whom it comes. Paul was honoured by the Philippians as their father in the gospel, and as one who had won a high distinction by his conspicuous abilities and labours in other spheres; and Timothy was well known to them as a devoted minister and fellow-helper of the apostle. Words coming from such a source would be gratefully welcomed and fondly cherished. Paul does not give prominence to his apostleship, as in the inscriptions to other epistles. The Philippians had already sufficient proof of his apostolic authority and power. Paul and his colleagues were reverenced as "the servants of Jesus Christ." They acknowledged subjection, not to man, but to Christ; they lived to advance His interests and honour, and found their highest joy in His service, though attended with hard toil, unreasoning persecution, and unparalleled suffering. The Baptist Missionary Society adopted for its motto a device found upon an ancient medal representing a bullock standing between a plough and an altar, with the inscription, "Ready for either, for toil or for sacrifice." The service of Christ is a life of self-sacrifice; but that is the pathway of duty, of blessing, of reward, of glory.

III. **Invokes the bestowment of great blessings.**—"Grace be unto you, and peace" (ver. 2). Grace and peace are divine gifts, proceeding from "God the Father," as the original and active Source of all blessings, and from "the Lord Jesus Christ" who is now exalted to the right hand of the divine majesty to bestow those blessings upon His people. Grace, the unmerited favour of God, is the exhaustless fountain of all other blessings, and includes the ever-flowing stream of the Holy Spirit's influences; peace, the result of grace, is the tranquillity and joy of heart realised on reconciliation with God. The very form of this salutation implies the union of Jew, Greek, and Gentile. The Greek salutation was "joy," akin to the word for grace. The Roman was "health," the intermediate term between grace and peace. The Hebrew was "peace," including both temporal and spiritual prosperity. The great mission of the gospel is to spread peace on earth, peace with men, following on peace with God. The believer enjoys peace even in the midst of trial and suffering. One of the martyrs, exposed to public derision in an iron cage, is reported to have said to a bystander, who expressed surprise at the cheerfulness he manifested, "You can see these bars, but you cannot hear the music in my conscience."

Lessons.—1. *Religion teaches the truest courtesy.* 2. *The unselfish heart wishes well to all.* 3. *That greeting is the most genuine that recognises the claims of God.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1, 2. *The Apostolic Greeting.*—1. Unity and concord amongst ministers in giving joint testimony to the same truths add weight to what they preach. Preachers are in a special manner the servants of Christ as being wholly and perpetually dedicated to His service. 2. As to make a man internally and spiritually holy it is necessary he be in Christ by faith, so to make him externally holy requires a visible and external union with Christ in professing truths relating to Him. 3. The dignity of a minister or of any Church officer does not exempt him from the necessity of being taught, exhorted, reproved, and comforted. 4. God's grace is the fountain from which peace with God, with our own conscience, and all sanctified prosperity and peace among ourselves do flow. In seeking things from God we look to Him, not as standing disaffected to us and at a distance, but as our Father.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 1. *The Commencement of the Gospel at Philippi.*

I. **To secure the widest diffusion of the gospel great centres should be the first places chosen for the concentration of its forces.**

II. **The gospel of universal adaptation has a world-wide mission.**—The first three converts embraced different nationalities, employments, social grades,—Lydia, the oriental trader, the Grecian female slave and soothsayer, the Roman keeper of the prison. Christ has demolished all barriers to the exercise of divine mercy.

III. **The duty and privilege of Christian parents to consecrate their children and home to Christ** (Acts xvi. 15, 33, 34, 40).

IV. **Civic distinctions subordinated to Christ will further the gospel and adorn the Christian name.**—Paul's Roman citizenship gained his freedom and silenced his enemies. His chain connects the history of Rome and Philippi. The Christian's spirit can defy the inner prison to suppress its praise or prayer (Acts xvi. 25).

Ver. 2. *God our Father.*—Christ aimed at raising men from the bondage of mere servants into the freedom of sons. He taught that God our Father was henceforth to be—

I. **The sole Model of perfection.** (Matt. vi. 48).

II. **The sole Rewarder of alms-giving** (Matt. vi. 4).

III. **The sole Hearer of prayer** (Matt. vi. 6).

IV. **The sole Observer of fastings** (Matt. vi. 18).

V. **The sole Provider of daily wants** (Matt. vi. 26-33). — *Lay Preacher.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 3—8.

Eulogy of Christian Excellence—

I. **Prompted by pleasant memories of faithful co-operation in Christian work.**—"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, . . . for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, . . . inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace" (vers. 3, 5, 7). The apostle remembers with joy the way in which the Philippians first received the gospel, the effect it produced upon their lives, the eagerness with which they entered into his plans for its wider propagation, the liberality, though not themselves a rich people, they showed to their needy brethren in other Churches, the affectionate attachment they displayed towards himself, the

help they afforded him when in imprisonment, and the many ways in which they cheerfully co-operated with him in the defence and establishment of the truth. They had laboured, suffered, triumphed, and rejoiced together. The apostle's eulogy of their character was not flattery, but sober and just commendation of tried and sterling excellencies. Our happiest memories—memories that become more vivid as life advances—are of those days in which we laboured most earnestly in the service of God.

II. **Springs from a loving appreciation and tender Christian solicitude.**—"Even as it is meet for me to think thus of you all, because I have you in my heart. . . . For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ" (vers. 7, 8). There was something about the Philippians that captivated the heart of the apostle. He loved them because they loved his Master, and because they sought to spread the gospel he preached. Love begets love, and there is no power in uniting hearts like the love of Christ. The love of the apostle was manifested in a yearning desire for their advancement in personal godliness. "All real spiritual love," says Alford, "is but a portion of Christ's love which yearns in all who are united to Him." Christian love is not mere self-indulgence of a pleasant feeling; its unselfishness is evident in seeking to advance the highest spiritual interests of the person loved. It is something more than a refined and noble sentiment. The finest feeling may be very superficial. Some friends were drinking tea one evening at the house of Mr. Mackenzie, the author of *The Man of Feeling*, and waited for some time for his arrival. At length he came in heated and excited, and exclaimed, "What a glorious evening I have had!" They thought he spoke of the weather, which was singularly beautiful; but he went on to detail the intense enjoyment he had had in witnessing a cock-fight. Mrs. Mackenzie listened some time in silence; then, looking up in his face, she remarked in her gentle voice, "Oh, Harry, Harry, your feeling is all on paper!"

III. **Strengthened by the assurance of increasing Christian devotion.**—"Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (ver. 6). Even man, fickle as he is, does not begin work at random and without purpose; some time or other he hopes to finish it. But God, who begins the work of the new spiritual creation in the soul, is constantly striving to finish it, until it shall be presented perfect at the day of Christ. The apostle had no doubt about the divine working, and he rejoiced in the evidence he had that his converts were increasing in spiritual fervour and devotion. Faithfulness to God strengthens fidelity in every duty of life. On board the flag-ship of a celebrated commander a complaint was made by the captain against a number of the crew for disturbing the ship's company by frequent noises. The admiral ordered an inquiry to be made. The accusation was that these men were Methodists, and that when their watch was below they were in the constant habit of reading the Bible to each other aloud, of frequently joining in social prayer and singing of psalms and hymns. After the statement had been proved, the admiral asked, "What is the general conduct of these men on deck—orderly or disobedient, cleanly or the contrary?" "Always orderly, obedient, and cleanly," was the reply. "When the watch is called, do they linger, or are they ready?" "Always ready at the first call." "You have seen these men in battle, sir; do they stand to their guns or shrink?" "They are the most intrepid men in the ship, my lord, and will die at their post." "Let them alone, then," was the decisive answer of this magnanimous commander; "if Methodists are such men, I wish that all my crew were Methodists."

IV. **Expressed in thanksgiving and joyous prayer.**—"I thank my God . . . always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy" (vers. 3, 4). Joy is the characteristic feature in this epistle, as love is in that to the Ephesians.

Love and joy are the two firstfruits of the Spirit. Joy gives especial animation to prayers. It marked the apostle's high opinion of them, that there was almost everything in them to give him joy, and almost nothing to give him pain (*Fausset*). The labour of prayer is sure, if persisted in, to merge into the joy of prayer. Prayer is a blessing to others as well as to ourselves. The father of Sir Philip Sydney enjoined upon his son, when he went to school, never to neglect thoughtful prayer. It was golden advice, and doubtless his faithful obedience to the precept helped to make Philip Sydney the peerless flower of knighthood, and the stainless man that he was—a man for whom, months after his death, every gentleman in England wore mourning.

Lessons.—1. *Christian excellence is a reflection of the character of Christ.* 2. *Christian excellence is acquired by praying and working.* 3. *Genuine Christianity is its own best eulogy.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 3. *Happy Memories.*

I. Those that are prompted by the Spirit of God.

II. Those that recall the past joy of harvest.

III. Those that still link us in association with distant but kindred spirits.

IV. Those that evoke perennial gratitude to God.

V. Those that enrich our own moral worth.—*Lay Preacher.*

Vers. 4, 5. *Fellowship in the Gospel.*

I. Christian ministers have a claim to maintenance from the people.

II. Fellowship is making another a fellow-partaker of what belongs to us.

III. The apostle Paul while claiming his privilege was cautious in using it.

IV. The voluntary system has advantages, but greater disadvantages.—*Archbishop Whately.*

Ver. 4. "Making request with joy." *Pure Joy*—

I. Springs from divine communications.

II. Succeeds a previous sorrow.

III. Is superior to human surroundings.

IV. Is sustained by answered prayer.—*Lay Preacher.*

Ver. 5. *True Gospel Fellowship.*

I. Lives which adorn it.

II. Hearts which beat for it.

III. Lips which testify for it.

IV. Hands which work for it.

V. Gifts which extend it.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 6. *Grounds of Confidence in the Believer's Salvation.*

I. That the Philippians persevered in the midst of great difficulties, opposition, and persecution.

II. That their persevering fellowship in the gospel had been characterised by great purity and consistency of Christian life.

III. That they gave evidences of zeal for the propagation of religion and of liberality in contributing of their worldly substance to this end.

Lessons.—1. *This doctrine affords comfort and hope to struggling Christians.* 2. *The grounds of assurance forbid presumptuous confidence and stimulate to watchfulness and effort.*—*Homiletic Monthly.*

The Perseverance of the Saints.

I. I shall adduce some of the principal arguments in support of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.—1. The decree of election. 2. The merit of Christ's sufferings and death. 3. The intercession of Christ. 4. The promises of God. 5. The constitution of the covenant of grace. 6. The statements of Scripture in regard to the constant indwelling of the Holy Spirit in all believers.

II. I shall consider some of the most plausible objections which have been

urged against this doctrine.—1. That some of the most eminent saints have fallen into very grievous sins. They did not fall totally and finally. 2. That many who were long regarded as true Christians do in point of fact finally apostatise. They never were true Christians. 3. That there are in Scripture many earnest exhortations to watchfulness, and many awful warnings against apostasy. God works by means and motives. 4. That believers being assured of their ultimate recovery will be encouraged to sin. The perseverance of the saints is perseverance in holiness. (1) Has a good work begun in you? (2) If so, remember that while the perseverance of the saints is promised as a privilege, it is also enjoined as a duty.—*G. Brooks.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9—11.

A Prayer for Christian Love—

I. **That it may be regulated by knowledge and discretion.**—"And this I pray, that your love may abound . . . in knowledge and in all judgment" (ver. 9).

1. *So as to test what is best.*—"That ye may approve things that are excellent" (ver. 10)—test things that differ. Two faculties of the mind are to be brought into exercise—knowledge, the acquisitive faculty; and judgment, the perceptive faculty. Love is not a wild, ignorant enthusiasm, but the warm affection of a heart, guided by extensive and accurate knowledge, and by a clear, spiritual perception. From a number of good things we select and utilise the best.

2. *So as to maintain a blameless life.*—"That ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (ver. 10). Be so transparent in heart and life as neither to give nor take offence, and when examined in the light of the day of Christ to be adjudged blameless. To live a useful and holy life we must both think and feel aright. Love will ever prompt us to the holiest conduct and to the best work. "I once asked a distinguished artist," said Boree, "what place he gave to labour in art. 'Labour is the beginning, the middle, and the end of art,' was the answer. I turned to another and inquired, 'What do you consider as the great force in art?' 'Love,' was the reply. In these two answers I found but one truth."

II. **That it may stimulate the growth of a high Christian character.**—1. *A high Christian character is the outcome of righteous principles.* "Being filled with the fruits—the fruit—of righteousness." All Christian virtues are from the one common root of the Spirit. It is He who plants them in the heart, fosters their growth, brings them to perfection, and fills the soul with them as the trees are laden with ripened fruit. The apostle prays for more love, because love impels us to act righteously in all things, even in the minor affairs of life. "Just as the quality of life," says Maclaren, "may be as perfect in the minutest animalculæ, of which there may be millions in a cubic inch and generations may die in an hour—just as perfect in the smallest insect as in behemoth, biggest born of earth, so righteousness may be as completely embodied, as perfectly set forth, as fully operative in the tiniest action that I can do, as in the largest that an immortal spirit can be set to perform. The circle that is in a gnat's eye is as true a circle as the one that holds within its sweep all the stars, and the sphere that a dewdrop makes is as perfect a sphere as that of the world. All duties are the same which are done from the same motives; all actions which are not so done are all alike sins."

2. *A high Christian character honours God.*—"Which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (ver. 11). The righteousness which exalts man honours God. It is a practical manifestation of the grace communicated through Jesus Christ, and adorns the doctrine which is according to godliness. There are

those who live soberly and righteously in this present world; but what about their duty to God? God is not in all their thoughts. That there has been no acceptance into their lives of Christ—without which acceptance God is a stranger to us and we strangers to God, no consecration to Christ, no referring to His will, no love to His person, and no zeal for His glory—of all this they are perfectly aware. And the thought of their heart is, that the omission is of no great consequence, and so long as they live soberly and righteously, it matters little or nothing whether they do or do not live godly. The power lacking is that for which the apostle prays—the power of love, whole-hearted love to Christ.

III. **That it may be enjoyed in ever-increasing measure.**—"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more" (ver. 9). Some time ago the public mind was filled with uneasiness in expectation of a high tide which was to visit our shores, and which it was feared would work great mischief. As the time drew near, the anxiety increased. At length the tide flowed in, rose to its highest point, and then retired, bearing with it the fears that had agitated the public mind. Why this alarm? Because all know the unmanageable, destructive power of water, when it once bursts its bounds. Love, unlike water, the more it abounds and overflows the greater the benefits it bestows. There is no fear that we shall love God too much; it is our shame and loss that we love Him so little. Love chafes against all limitations.

Lessons.—1. *Love is the essence of Christianity.* 2. *Love should govern every part of the Christian life.* 3. *Love may be augmented by earnest prayer.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 9, 10. *The Apostle's Prayer for Abounding Love*—

I. **In its application to the affections.**—"That your love may abound yet more and more" (ver. 9).

1. *Love to God.*—(1) Because of the supreme excellence of His character. (2) Because of His generous interposition in the work of human redemption. (3) Because of the benefits He is constantly bestowing.

2. *Love to one another.*—Love promotes brotherly unity—oneness of feeling, of aim, of effort. Unity promotes strength. To strength in its combined action victory is given.

3. *Love to the unsaved.*—The law of Moses insisted, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour"; to which the Pharisees made this addition, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." Christ interprets the law of love in the command, "I say unto you, Love your enemies."

II. **In its application to the intellect.**—"In knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent" (vers. 9, 10). Knowledge, the faculty to acquire information; judgment, the faculty to discern its value and use: the one leads to the sources of truth and appropriates its stores, the other selects and uses what is acquired. These two faculties necessary—1. *In judging revealed truth.* 2. *In judging Christian experience.* 3. *In selecting what is best in all truths.*

III. **In its application to the conduct.**—"That ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (ver. 10).

1. *An inward state.*—Sincerity, transparency of character.

2. *An outward walk.*—Inoffensiveness of conduct. Not designedly giving offence; sacrificing everything but principle rather than grieve or mislead a weak brother.

3. *Perseverance in an upright life.*—"Till the day of Christ." This is the scorner's day; the good are hated and despised; but the day of Christ is coming, and will rectify all wrongs. A day of blessing and honour to the good, of confusion and punishment to

the wicked; of approval to the one, of condemnation to the other.

Ver. 9. "And this I pray." *Definiteness in Prayer*—

I. **Implies a deep consciousness of an intelligently apprehended need.**

II. **Becoming, when an intelligent being addresses the divine Intelligence.**

III. **Essential from the very nature of prayer.**

IV. **Affords a fixed ground from the exercise of faith.**

V. **Emboldens supplication.**

VI. **Inspires hope of a definite response.**—*Lay Preacher.*

Ver. 10. "That ye may approve things that are excellent." *Spiritual Discrimination*—

I. **Demands the exercise of the most intelligent and sensitive charity.**

II. **Commands a wide field of effort—the bad, the good, the better, the best—in character, life, doctrine, practice, enjoyment, attainment.**

III. **Implies the admission and use of a noble liberty of thought, judgment, and action.**

IV. **Involves a weighty and far-reaching responsibility.**

V. **Is essential to a pure and blameless life.**—*Ibid.*

"That ye may be sincere." *The Value of Sincerity in Youth.*

There is a false sincerity which is a compound of ignorance and obstinacy. The heathen may be devout and sincere in his idolatry, but he is a heathen still. The Mahometan may be devout and sincere in his worship of the one God, but he rejects the Christ who is the source and substance of all true religion. The sceptic may be devout and earnest in his investigation of the facts of the universe; but he ignores the great moral truths on which he stumbles in the course of his inquiries, and refuses to accept and be influenced by them. There is no craze of the wildest fanatic that may not be adopted as an article of faith, if apparent sincerity is to be the test of its genuineness. The fact is, a man may be sincere, but grossly mistaken. A sincere heart is that through which the light of God shines, unimpeded by duplicity and sin, and is a condition of heart obtained only by living much in the presence and the light of God.

I. **Be sincere in the search after truth.**—Truth must be sought for its own sake, and is revealed only to the humble and sincere seeker. It is of supreme importance to you to find the truth. Truth has but one direction and one goal—it terminates in the radiant presence of a living personality. When you come into the presence of truth, you come into the presence of God. Truth has a living embodiment in Christ Jesus. If you desire a solution of the perplexing riddles of life, if you would understand the principles on which God governs the universe, if you wish to dissipate the doubts that becloud and harass the mind, if you desire rest and peace of conscience, and to obtain strength and inspiration to live a happy, useful, and noble life—then seek the truth as it is in Jesus; and if you are really sincere, you shall not seek in vain.

II. **Be sincere in your social intercourse with one another.**—1. *In your friendships.* 2. *In your promises.*

III. **Be sincere in the service of God.**

IV. **Be sincere in the cultivation of your own personal piety.**

Christian Rectitude—

I. **Consists in internal sincerity.**—1. *This involves a concentratedness of heart upon one object.* 2. *A thoroughness of life's uniformity to that one object.* 3. *An unostentatious but manifest integrity.* 4. *The completeness of that manifestation should be proportionate to the brightness of the testing light.*

II. **Consists in external blamelessness.**—1. *Without being found guilty of offence.* 2. *Without giving offence.* 3. *Without taking offence.*

III. **Consists in a present state of life, with a glorious future destina-**

tion.—"That ye may be without offence till the day of Christ." 1. *Then life shall be judged.* 2. *Life shall be made manifest.* 3. *Rectitude of life shall be approved.* 4. *Rectitude of life shall be rewarded.*—*Lay Preacher.*

Ver. 11. *Fruits of Righteousness.*

I. **The nature of righteousness.**—1. *Sometimes the term refers to the divine Being, and signifies the purity of His nature and the perfection of His works.* 2. *Here it signifies personal holiness.*

II. **The fruits of righteousness.**—1. *Christian righteousness is productive of gracious fruits.* These fruits are internal in the heart, and external in the life.

2. *The fruits of righteousness are abundant and progressive.*—"Being filled with the fruits."

III. **The Author of righteousness.**—"Which are by Jesus Christ." 1. *Righteousness is purchased by Christ as our Redeemer.* 2. *Is derived from Him as our Saviour.*

IV. **The results of righteousness.**—"Unto the glory and praise of God." 1. *Righteousness is to the glory and praise of God in the scheme of redemption.* 2. *In the subjects of redemption.*

Lessons.—1. *This subject should stimulate our desires.* 2. *Promote our devotion.* 3. *Inspire us with praise.*—*Theological Sketch Book.*

Spiritual Attainment.

I. **Righteousness of heart precedes righteousness of life.**

II. **Righteousness of heart is self-disseminating.**—1. *Its fruit is living.* 2. *Of harmonious unity.* 3. *Luxuriant.*

III. **Righteousness of heart is the only thing that can fill the capacities of man.**

IV. **Fulness of righteousness is all divine.**—1. *In its source.* 2. *In its medium of communication.* "By Jesus Christ." 3. *In its end.* "Unto the glory and praise of God." Glory before men: praise among men.—*Lay Preacher.*

Divine Culture.

I. **The field.**—The loving heart.
II. **The seed.**—Righteousness.
III. **The fruit.**—Abundant.
IV. **The husbandman.**—Jesus Christ.
V. **The end.**—The glory and praise of God.—*Ibid.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12—18.

The Gospel Irrepressible—

I. **Notwithstanding the circumscribed opportunities of its agents.**—1. *Their sufferings for the gospel call attention to its claims.* "The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather into the furtherance of the gospel; so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places" (vers. 12, 13). It might seem to the Philippians that the imprisonment of Paul would be unfavourable to the gospel and prevent its spread. He shows there was no ground for that fear; but that the gospel was becoming known in quarters which, but for his imprisonment, it was not likely to gain access. The palace referred to was the prætorium, or barrack of the prætorian guards attached to the palace of Nero on the Palatine Hill in Rome. The regular changes of guards was constantly furnishing new auditors for the irrepressible preacher, and he did not fail to zealously improve his opportunities. Thus the gospel, which the malice and bigotry of the Jews sought to suppress, found its way into Cæsar's household, and ultimately captured the Roman empire for Christ. The persecutions of the gospel have been the best helpers of its success.

2. *Their sufferings for the gospel stimulate the zeal of its propagators.*—"Many of the brethren, . . . waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear" (ver. 14). The fortitude of the apostle in suffering, and his

unwearied efforts to preach the gospel, increased the courage of his fellow-helpers in the same good work. The sufferings of the gospel pioneers contributed to the spread and triumph of the truth. The blood of Scotland's proto-martyr, the noble Patrick Hamilton, and the memory of his dying prayer, "How long, O Lord, shall darkness cover this realm?" fomented the young Reformation life over a comparatively silent germinating period of more than twenty years. Knox, and with him Scotland, kindled at the pile of George Wishart. Andrew Melville caught the falling mantle of Knox. When Richard Cameron fell at Aird's Moss—as if in answer to his own prayers as the action began, "Lord, spare the green and take the ripe!"—all the more strenuously strove Cargill, till he too, in the following year, sealed the truth with his blood. And more followed, and yet more, through that last and worst decade of the pitiless storm known as, by emphasis, the *killing time.* Through those terrible years Peden dragged out a living death, and as he thought of Cameron, now at rest, often exclaimed, "Oh to be with Ritchie!" Young Renwick too caught up the torn flag, nobly saying, "They are but standard-bearers who have fallen; the Master lives." Thus one after another on blood-stained scaffold, or on blood-soaked field, fell the precious seed-grain, to rise in harvests manifold, till just at the darkest hour before the dawn of Renwick's martyrdom closed the red roll in 1688—the year of the revolution—and the seed so long sown in tears was reaped in joy.

II. **It is preached from a variety of motives.**—1. *Some preach the gospel from the love of controversy.* "Some indeed preach Christ of envy and strife . . . of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds" (vers. 15, 16). The Judaising teachers, taking advantage of the absence of the apostle, sought to propagate their erroneous theories of the gospel, and to annoy the apostle by depreciating his authority and his preaching. They aimed not so much at winning souls for Christ, as at exalting themselves and gaining credence to their corrupt opinions. They argued that Jesus of Nazareth was the King of Israel, hoping thereby to exasperate the Roman government against Paul, who preached the same truth, though in a different sense, and to cause increased pain to the apostle by insisting upon the obligation of obedience to the law in order to salvation. Yet in opposing the gospel they stated some of its leading truths, if only to refute them. Controversy is often a waste of strength. They are small, insignificant beings who quarrel oftenest. There's a magnificent breed of cattle in the Vale of Clwyd, the most beautiful vale in Wales. They have scarcely any horns, but abundance of meat; yet if you ascend the hills on every side, there on the heights you find a breed which grows scarcely anything but horns, and from morning to night all you hear is the constant din of clashing weapons. So there are many Christians who live on the heights, the cold and barren heights of controversy. Everything they eat grows into horns, the strength of which they are constantly testing.

2. *Some preach the gospel from the highest regard for its lofty message.*—"Some also of goodwill . . . of love, knowing that I am set [appointed of God] for the defence of the gospel" (vers. 15, 17). An intense love of the gospel and of the Christ of the gospel is the best preparation for preaching it. Preaching to be effectual must be as various as nature. The sun warms at the same moment that it enlightens; and unless religious truth be addressed at once to the reason and to the affections, unless it kindles while it guides, it is a useless splendour, it leaves the heart barren, it produces no fruits of godliness. Preaching should help us to a higher life. A man once heard an affecting sermon, and while highly commending it was asked what he remembered of it. "Truly," he replied, "I remember nothing at all; but it made me resolve to live better, and by God's grace I will."

III. **The propagation of the gospel by any means is matter of fervent joy.**—"What then? notwithstanding, . . . Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (ver. 18). The false teachers gloated over Paul's misfortune, and thought to trouble him by their way of presenting the gospel. But the proclamation of Christ, however done, roused attention, and could not but be of service. The apostle rejoiced in the good result of their bad intentions. The success of the gospel in any place and by any means, when that success is real, is always a cause of rejoicing to the good.

Lessons.—1. *The gospel has a message for all classes.* 2. *Its faithful proclamation involves difficulty and suffering.* 3. *Its interests are often promoted from mixed motives.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 12-14. *Christian Boldness.*

I. **Distinguish Christian boldness from its counterfeits, and set forth some of its leading attributes.**—There is a false and hurtful boldness arising from—1. *Ignorance.* 2. *A bad judgment.* 3. *Native rashness.* 4. *The pride of courage which scorns to fear the face of man.* 5. *Mere natural resolution.* 6. *A wilful obstinacy.* 7. *A domineering spirit.* The boldness which God approves must be chiefly drawn from other sources and possess higher and more ethereal attributes. 1. *It must be bottomed on holy love*—love to God and love to man. 2. *It must be humble.* 3. *Must be delicate and regardful of all the rules of decorum.* 4. *Must be wise, discreet, and prudent.* 5. *Must be faithful.* 6. *Must be grounded not merely on self-denial and submission to the will of God, but on humble confidence in Him.*

II. **Some motives to rouse us to this holy and elevated frame and to a corresponding course of conduct.**—1. *This Christian heroism is absolutely necessary to clear up the evidences of our own piety.* 2. *Without rising up to this heroic and active zeal we cannot be faithful to God and our generation.* 3. *Estimate the importance of this duty by considering what would be the effect if all professing Christians were thus intrepid and faithful.* 4. *In many instances fear is altogether groundless, and is the mere suggestion of indolence.* 5. *For want of faithful admonition and entreaty many may have perished.*—*E. D. Griffin.*

Ver. 12. *The Development of Events in a Consecrated Life*—

I. **Is the work of an over-ruling Providence.**

II. **Produces startling results, disappointing alike to the hopes of the enemy and the fears of friends.**

III. **Whatever may be its starting-point attains its end in the furtherance of the gospel.**

IV. **Illustrates how moral principles when tried in suffering become mightier forces in the world's evangelisation.**

V. **A pledge that fellowship of suffering with Christ shall be followed by a fellowship of glory.**—*Lay Preacher.*

Ver. 13. *Moral Influence.*

I. **Paul's moral influence exerted a mighty power under the most disadvantageous circumstances** — in bonds.

II. **With a very limited opportunity**—one soldier daily.

III. **Upon a class of mind and heart not easily impressed**—the guard which had charge of him.

IV. **Throughout the city**—notwithstanding the restraints of his own hired house.

V. **Reaching the further field by first fully cultivating the one at hand.**—*Ibid.*

Ver. 14. *The Ministry of Paul's Bonds.*

I. **It was loyal to his Roman citizenship** (Acts xxvi. 31, 32).

II. **Christ-like, it was silent amid provocation, self-sacrificing, persuasive.**

III. **It was fruitful in the furtherance of the gospel.**—1. *By preaching it under the shadow of Nero's palace.* 2. *By intensifying the love of it and zeal for it in the hearts of the brethren.*

IV. **It illustrates** *how Christ can erect a pulpit for Himself in the very camp of the enemy, and put a voice for His glory even into chains.—Lay Preacher.*

Ver. 15. *A Spurious Ministry.*

I. **The elements formative of it.**—1. *An imperfect apprehension of Christ's mission.* 2. *A total absence of Christ's spirit.* 3. *Thought and sympathy narrowed by early prejudice and preconceived ideas.* 4. *Christ made subservient to the doctrines, ritual, and history of a system.*

II. **The results inseparable from it.**—1. *The cross degraded into a rallying point for party strife.* 2. *The basest spirit indulged under the pretence of fulfilling a sacred office.* (1) Envy—displeasure at another's good. (2) Strife—selfish rivalry which seeks to gain the good belonging to another. 3. *Christ preached merely to advance a party.* 4. *Zeal for propagating a creed greater than to save a lost world.—Ibid.*

Ver. 16. *The Germ of a Spurious Ministry—*

I. **May exist in those who zealously preach Christ.**

II. **Consists in a moral contradiction between the heart of the preacher and the theme of his discourse**—contentiousness and Christ.

III. **Produces impurity of motive in Christian work**—"not sincerely."

IV. **Biases the judgment to expect results which are never realised**—"supposing."

V. **Inspires aims which are un-Christian**—"to add afflictions to my bonds."

Ver. 17. *The Real and the Counterfeit in the Christian Ministry.*

I. **They correspond.**—1. *Both adopt the Christian name.* 2. *Both utter the same shibboleth.* 3. *Both active in preaching Christ.*

II. **They differ.**—1. *In heart.* Contention rules the one; love reigns in the other.

2. *In spirit.*—Envy and strife moves the one; goodwill actuates the other.

3. *In source of strength.*—Love of party animates the one; waxing confident in the Lord emboldens the other.

4. *In aim.*—That of the one is to advance, it may be, a lifeless Church; that of the other to propel the gospel of Christ.

5. *In the depth and accuracy of conviction.*—The one "supposing to add affliction to my bonds"; the other "knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel."—*Lay Preacher.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 19—26.

The Noble Attitude of a Sufferer for the Truth.

I. The hostility of false brethren tends to the enlargement of the truth, whatever may be the fate of the sufferer.—1. *He is assured of personal blessing from the Spirit through prayer.* "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (ver. 19). The apostle already sees how his troubles and suffering may develop his own spiritual life and be a pathway to the glories of heaven. By the prayers of God's people he looks for an abundant supply of the Spirit, by whose agency his salvation will be perfected. The enemies of the good man cannot rob him of his interest in Christ, and suffering only adds new lustre to every Christian grace. The Port Royalist exclaimed, "Let us labour and suffer; we have all eternity to rest in." Paul, who, fighting with wild beasts, was a spectacle to angels and men, could reckon that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

2. *The greatness of Christ is set forth by the courage given to the sufferer, though uncertain of what awaits him.*—"According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but . . . Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death" (ver. 20). With the earnest expectation and hope of future glory, the apostle had no need to be ashamed of his work for God or of God's work in him; but he regarded his sufferings, not as a setting forth of his own goodness, but of the glory of Jesus, who gave him strength and fortitude to endure. It is in tribulation that the grace of Christ is most conspicuous. The Redeemer was perfected through suffering; so are His followers.

II. **The alternative of life or death presents a problem the sufferer is unable to solve.**—"What I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two" (vers. 22, 23).

1. *Life has great attractions.*—(1) Christ may be further exalted. "For to me to live is Christ" (ver. 21). Life is an opportunity for setting forth Christ, and this is done by carefully copying His example. "As I stood beside one of the wonderful Aubusson tapestries," says Eugene Stock, "I said to the gentleman in charge, 'How is this done?' He showed me a small loom with a partly finished web upon it, and said that the weaver stands behind his work, with his materials by his side, and above him the picture he is to copy, exactly thread for thread and colour for colour. He cannot vary a thread or a shade without marring his picture." It is a glorious thing for us to have a perfect life for example by which to form our lives. And we cannot vary a hair-breadth from that example without injuring our lives. (2) More results of Christian work may be gathered. "But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour" (ver. 22). The best use of life is to employ it in working for God. Work done for Him will remain when the worker is forgotten. In ministerial work we may garner the most precious fruits. (3) Help may be afforded to others. "Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (ver. 24). Paul was the pioneer and founder of Christianity among the Gentiles, and the young Churches looked to him for leadership and counsel. It seemed every way desirable that for their sakes his life should be continued. No one felt this more keenly than himself, though he was assured that if that life was prematurely terminated the cause of the gospel was safe in the hands of God.

2. *Death admits to superior advantages.*—"To die is gain" (ver. 21). Even by his death Christ would be glorified, and the apostle admitted not to shame or loss, as his enemies supposed, but to a state of blessed reward.

> "Sorrow vanquished, labour ended,
> Jordan past."

"Why should I fear death?" said Sir Henry Vane, as he awaited his execution; "I find it rather shrinks from me than I from it."

> "Death wounds to heal; I sink, I rise, I reign;
> Spring from my fetters, fasten in the skies,
> Where blooming Eden withers in my sight.
> Death gives us more than we in Eden lost."
>
> *Young.*

III. **The undaunted sufferer is confident of continued opportunities of advancing the joy of believers in the truth.**—"And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith, that your rejoicing may be more abundant" (vers. 25, 26). This assurance was verified by the apostle's return to Philippi on his release from his first captivity. "Man is immortal till his work is done." Life is short, and every moment of its duration should be spent for God and the good of others. Shall we repine at our trials which are but for a moment? "We are nearing home

day by day," wrote General Gordon. "No dark river, but divided waters are before us, and then let the world take its portion. Dust it is, and dust we will leave it. It is a long, weary journey, but we are well on the way of it. The yearly milestones quickly slip by, and as our days so will our strength be. The sand is flowing out of the glass, day and night, night and day; shake it not. You have a work to do here, to suffer even as Christ suffered."

Lessons.—1. *The highest virtues are not gained without suffering.* 2. *Suffering for the truth strengthens our attachment to it.* 3. *Suffering for the truth is often a means of spreading it.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 20. *Christ the Christian's Life.*

I. **Christ was the recognised Source of the apostle's life.**

II. **Christ was the supreme Object of the apostle's contemplation.**

III. **The glory of Christ was the great end of the apostle's endeavours.**—*H. Simon.*

Ver. 21. *The Christian's Life and Death.*

I. **The Christian's life.**—1. *It is a life in Christ.* (1) Begun in regeneration. (2) Realised by faith. (3) Sustained and increased by divine knowledge.

2. *It is a life for Christ.*—(1) The example of Christ is its model. (2) The will of Christ is its laws. (3) The glory of Christ is its end.

II. **The Christian's death.**—1. *The Christian's death is a gain by being deprived of something.* (1) Deprived of the sinful body. (2) Freed from temptation. (3) From his enemies. (4) From suffering. (5) From death.

2. *The Christian's death is a gain by acquiring something.*—(1) Accelerated liberty to worship God. (2) The ultimate addition of the glorified body with its exalted form and powers. (3) The blessed reunion and fellowship with departed friends. (4) The presence and companionship of Christ for ever.

Christian Life and Death.

I. **The apostle's language exhibits the proper scope and character of all truly Christian life.**—The end and substance of the Christian life is Christ.

II. **What Christian death is and how it ought to be regarded.**—Death is not simply altered life. It is life elevated and ennobled. It is gain compared with life in the flesh. Death raises the saint to be with Christ.

III. **The text puts Christian life and death before us regarded as an alternative.**—Whether life be more or less desirable, less or more desired, it should be spent under the strong and penetrating assurance that to die is gain. Be death ever so desirable, it is our own fault if the happiness of life does not more than counterbalance the trial of it.—*J. D. Geden.*

"For to me to live is Christ." *Enthusiasm for Christ.*

I. **Enthusiasm for Christ in the home-life.**

"The highest duties oft are found
Lying upon the lowest ground;
In hidden and unnoticed ways,
In household work on common days,
Whate'er is done for God alone
Thy God acceptable will own."

II. **Enthusiasm for Christ in public life.**

"Trust no future, howe'er pleasant,
Let the dead past bury its dead;
Act, act in the living present,
Heart within and God o'erhead."

III. **Enthusiasm for Christ in Church-life.**

"Come, labour on,
No time for rest till glows the western sky,
While the long shadows o'er our pathway lie,
And a glad sound comes with the setting sun,
Servants, well done!"

J. M. Forson.

The Christian's estimate of living and dying.

I. **The Christian's estimate of living should be a life in Christ.**—1. *A life of which Christ is the Source.* 2. *A life of which Christ is the Sustainer.* 3. *A life of which Christ is the Sphere.*

II. **The Christian's estimate of living should be a life for Christ.**—1. *A life spent in labouring for Him alone.* 2. *A life of continued suffering for Him.* 3. *A life of daring everything for Him.*

III. **The Christian's estimate of dying should be that it is gain.**—1. *Because death leads to closer and more uninterrupted union with Christ.* 2. *Because death lands the true believer in absolute security.*

Lessons.—1. *In some sense the utterance of the apostle is true of every Christian.* 2. *In its full sense it is only true of pre-eminent Christians.* 3. *The more it is true of any, the happier and more useful Christians they are.—Homiletic Quarterly.*

The Believer's Portion in both Worlds.

I. **The believer's life.**—1. *Is originated by Christ.* 2. *Is sustained by Christ.* 3. *Is spent to the glory of Christ.*

II. **The believer's end.**—1. *The gain of sorrows escaped.* 2. *The gain of joys secured.*

Lessons.—1. *Improve life.* 2. *Prepare for death.—C. Clayton, M.A.*

Vers. 23, 24. *Willing to wait, but ready to go.*

1. **The two desires.**—1. *To depart and be with Christ.* (1) The exodus from this life by dissolution of the body —"to depart." (2) Christ's presence the immediate portion of His people when their life on earth is done—"to be with Christ."

2. *To abide in the flesh.*—It is a natural and lawful desire. The love of life—it is not necessary, it is not lawful to destroy it. Let it alone to the last. The way to deal with it is not to tear it violently out, so as to have, or say that you have, no desire to remain; but to get, through the grace of the Spirit, such a blessed hope of Christ's presence as will gradually balance and at last overbalance the love of life, and make it at the appointed time come easily and gently away.

II. **A Christian balanced evenly between these two desires.**—"I am in a strait betwixt two." The desire to be with Christ does not make life unhappy, because it is balanced by the pleasure of working for Christ in the world; the desire to work for Christ in the world does not make the approach of dissolution painful, because it is balanced by the expectation of being soon, of being ever with the Lord.

III. **Practical Lessons.**—1. *This one text is sufficient to destroy the whole fabric of Romish prayer to departed saints.* 2. *The chief use of a Christian in the world is to do good.* 3. *You cannot be effectively useful to those who are in need on earth unless you hold by faith and hope to Christ on high.* 4. *Living hope of going to be with Christ is the only anodyne which has power to neutralise the pain of parting with those dear to us.—W. Arnot.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 27—30.

Exhortation to Christian Bravery.

I. **To act as becometh Christian citizens.**—"Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel of Christ" (ver. 27). Whether the apostle is able to visit them again or not, he exhorts the Philippians to attend diligently to present duties, and act in all things with the dignity and fidelity becoming members of the heavenly commonwealth. The Christian finding himself living for a time in this world as in a dark place, where other gods are worshipped, where men sell themselves for gain, where he is tempted to do as others do, and is asked to coquette with the world, to mind earthly things, should at once take his stand

and say: "I cannot; I am a citizen of heaven, my affections are set on things above; I cannot come down to your level, I have come out from the world and may not touch the unclean thing; I have formed other tastes, have other pleasures; other rules regulate my conduct; I cannot live as you live, nor do as you do."

1. *Be united in spiritual steadfastness.*—"That ye stand fast in one spirit" (ver. 27). The Spirit inspires the highest courage, and helps all who partake of His influence to stand fast in their integrity. "For God hath given us not the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."

2. *Earnestly and unitedly maintain the faith.*—"With one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (ver. 27). With one soul, penetrated by the same Spirit, unitedly strive to maintain the gospel in its purity, as it was committed unto them. Every true believer should be a valiant champion for the truth. Men who have no settled faith are like those birds that frequent the Golden Horn, and are to be seen from Constantinople, of which it is said they are always on the wing and never rest. No one ever saw them alight on the water or on the land; they are for ever poised in mid-air. The natives call them lost souls, seeking rest and finding none. To lose our hold of the gospel is to be doomed to unrest and misery. To attempt to stand alone is to court defeat. Union is strength.

3. *Remember the interest of your religious teachers in your endeavours.*—"That whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs" (ver. 27). The anxious minister is ever deeply concerned in the welfare of his people. He rejoices in their faithfulness and progress; he mourns over their laxity and defeat; he encourages them in their labours and struggles in the spread of the truth. Our defection from the gospel is not only a loss to ourselves, but a disappointment and sorrow to others.

II. **To act with fearlessness in the midst of opposition.**—"And in nothing terrified by your adversaries" (ver. 28). Opposition should nerve to more resolute resistance. The enemies of the good are the enemies of God, and the good man, with God on his side, need not fear either their numbers or their ferocity. One of their ancient kings said, "The Lacedæmonians seldom inquire the number of their enemies, but the place where they could be found." When a certain captain rushed in haste to his general and said, "The enemy is coming in such vast numbers, it will be useless to resist," the general replied, "Our duty is not to count our enemies, but to conquer them." And conquer them they did.

1. *This fearlessness a proof of the inevitable punishment of their opponents.*—"Which is to them an evident token of perdition" (ver. 28). In contending hopelessly against you they are only rushing on to their own destruction. Your bravery in the contest, and their own consciousness of the weakness of their own cause, will strike terror into their hearts, so that they will be easily routed.

2. *This fearlessness a proof of the salvation of the steadfast.*—"But to you of salvation, and that of God" (ver. 28). God who gives courage to the steadfast and helps them in the conflict, ensures to them the victory. We are not saved because we are brave for God and truth, but the courageous soul will not fail of salvation.

III. **To accept suffering for the truth as a privilege and a discipline.**—1. *It is suffering for Christ.* "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake" (ver. 29). Suffering is no evidence of the divine displeasure, but is often a signal proof of the divine regard. There is no virtue in the mere endurance of suffering, but in the Christ-like spirit with which it is borne. There lived in a village near Burnley a girl who was persecuted in her own home because she was a Christian. She struggled on bravely, seeking strength from God, and rejoicing that she was

a partaker of Christ's sufferings. The struggle was too much for her; but He willed it so, and at length her sufferings were ended. When they came to take off the clothes from her poor dead body, they found a piece of paper sewn inside her dress, and on it was written, "He opened not His mouth."

2. *It is suffering which the best of men have endured.*—"Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me" (ver. 30). Suffering for the truth links us with Paul and his contemporaries, and with the noble army of martyrs in all ages. Christ has taught us how to suffer, and for His sake we can bear pain and calumny without complaining and without retaliation. Mrs. Sherwood relates that, pained at seeing Henry Martyn completely prostrate by his tormentor, Sabat, the apostate, she exclaimed, "Why subject yourself to all this? Rid yourself of this Sabat at once." He replied, "Not if his spirit was ten times more acrimonious and exasperating." Then smiling in his gentle, winning manner, he pointed upwards and whispered in low and earnest tones, "For Him!"

Lessons.—1. *The Christian spirit inspires the loftiest heroism.* 2. *To strive to be good excites the opposition of the wicked.* 3. *One true Christian hero is an encouragement to many.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 27. *Christian Consistency.*

I. **The apostle pleaded for a consistent Christian Church.**—1. *The Christian life must be characterised by truthfulness.* 2. *By love.* 3. *By purity.*

II. **The apostle pleaded for a united Christian Church.**—1. *This union was necessary to resist their common adversaries.* 2. *To develop their Christian graces.* 3. *To establish the true faith.*

III. **The apostle pleaded for a zealous Christian Church.**—1. *This zeal demanded for a noble object.* "The faith of the gospel." 2. *To be exercised in a commendable manner.* "Striving together."—*J. T. Woodhouse.*

Evangelical Consistency.

I. **What that conduct is which becomes the gospel.**—1. *It must be the genuine result of gospel dispositions.* 2. *It must be maintained under the influence of gospel principles and in the use of gospel ordinances.* 3. *It must resemble gospel patterns.* 4. *It must be conformable to gospel precepts.*

II. **What obligations are we under to maintain this conduct.**—1. *God requires us to conduct ourselves according to the gospel.* 2. *Consistency requires it.* 3. *Our personal comfort requires it.* 4. *Our connection with society requires it.* 5. *Our final salvation requires it.*

Lessons.—1. *How excellent is the Christian religion.* 2. *How illiberal and unreasonable is the conduct of those who censure Christianity on account of the unworthy actions of its inconsistent professors.*—*R. Treffry.*

The Effects of the Gospel upon those who receive it.

I. **Illustrate the exhortation of the apostle.**—1. *The gospel of Christ is a system which assumes and proceeds upon the incalculable value of the soul.* 2. *Which assumes and depicts the danger and guilt of the soul, and provides a plan for its immediate restoration to the divine favour.* 3. *Is a system of peculiar and authoritative truth.* 4. *Is a system of godliness.* 5. *Of morals.* 6. *Of universal charity.*

II. **The sources of the apostle's anxiety.**—1. *He desired the Philippians thus to act from a regard to the honour of the gospel and its author.* 2. *Out of a regard for the Philippians themselves.* 3. *From a regard to the Gentiles.* 4. *From a regard to himself, his own peace, and his own joy.*—*T. Binney.*

Vers. 28, 29. *Conflict and Suffering.*—1. Faith in Christ must go before suffering for Christ, so that to suffer

for Him is of greater importance, and in some respects more honourable, than simply to believe in Him. 2. Then are sufferings truly Christian and an evidence of salvation, when as the sufferer is first a believer, so his sufferings are for Christ's sake—for His truth. 3. Christian courage under suffering will not be kept up without conflict. 4. In suffering for truth nothing befalls us but what is common to men.—*Fergusson.*

CHAPTER II.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Consolation in Christ.**—*Exhortation* would be better, inasmuch as consolation anticipates the comfort of the next phrase. **Comfort of love.**—Encouragement which love gives. **Fellowship of the Spirit.**—"Participation in the Spirit." *Meyer's* remark is, "This is to be explained of the Holy Spirit." *Beet* intimates a widening of the idea—"brotherliness prompted by the Holy Spirit." **Bowels and mercies.**—On the former term see i. 8. The word for mercies denotes the yearning of the heart, though, it may be, there is no ability to help.

Ver. 2. **Fulfil ye my joy.**—"Fill up" my cup of joy. See i. 4. **Likeminded.**—"General harmony, . . . identity of sentiment" (*Meyer*). On this verse, with its accumulations, Chrysostom exclaims, "Bless me! how often he says the same thing!"

Ver. 3. **Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory.**—The verb is suppressed in the Greek, a construction more natural and more forcible than to connect the nothing with the preceding clause. "Partisanship and pomposity." For the ruin of how many Churches are this pair responsible! **In lowliness of mind.**—A rare flower, scattering its fragrance unseen. "It was one great result of the life of Christ (on which St. Paul dwells here) to raise humility to its proper level; and, if not fresh coined for this purpose, the word (for 'lowliness of mind') now first became current through the influence of Christian ethics" (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 5. **Let this mind be in you.**—The apostle's word reminds us that he had already counselled his readers to be likeminded amongst themselves. "Each to each, and all to Christ," this verse seems to say. What follows—to ver. 11—is the very marrow of the gospel.

Ver. 6. **Who, being in the form of God.**—R.V. margin, "being originally." Form here implies not the external accidents, but the essential attributes. Similar to this, but not so decisive, are the expressions used elsewhere of the divinity of the Son (2 Cor. iv. 4; Col. i. 15; Heb. i. 3). Similar is the term "The Word." **Thought it not robbery.**—"Did not deem His being on an equality with God a thing to be seized on—and retained as a prize" (*Ellicott*). "Yet did not regard it as a prize, a treasure to be clutched and retained at all hazards" (*Lightfoot*). This interpretation of the two eminent bishops is accepted by the R.V., the *Speaker's Commentary*, and is the common and indeed almost universal interpretation of the Greek Fathers (*Lightfoot*, flatly contradicted by *Beet*). *Meyer* (followed by *Beet*), *Cremer* and *Hofmann* contend for the active meaning—"robbing." **To be equal with God.**—The Jews considered Christ's peculiar claim of Sonship as a "making Himself equal with God" (John v. 18).

Ver. 7. **But made Himself of no reputation.**—R.V. "emptied Himself." The emphasis is upon *Himself.* In contrast to the idea lying in "robbery"—that of emptying the treasures of some one else—it was Himself whom He made bare. **And took upon Him the form of a servant.**—By taking the form of a slave. Note the antitheses in these verses (6, 7), "being in the form of God," "took the form of a servant," "equality with God," "emptied Himself." **And was made in the likeness of men.**—Lit. "becoming in similitude of men." The word "likeness" (A.V. margin, "habit") differs from "form" and "fashion." There is, of course, no support for the Docetic teaching that Christ was only seemingly a man.

Ver. 8. **In fashion.**—The entire outwardly perceptible mode and form. Men saw in Christ a human form, bearing, language, action, mode of life, wants and their satisfaction, in general, the state and relations of a human being so that He was recognised "as a man" (*Meyer*). "Form" (in vers. 6, 7) is that which is intrinsic and essential. "Fashion" is that which is outward and accidental. **Became obedient unto death.**—Does not mean that He humbled Himself so as to become a cringing slave to the King of Terrors; but that His obedience to God went to the uttermost limit—as far as death—even the death of the cross.

That is, the death of the accursed, the death reserved for malefactors. Jewish hatred still speaks of Christ as, "The man who was hung."

Ver. 9. **Highly exalted.**—A word much stronger than those, *e.g.*, in the Acts, which describe the raising up of the murdered Lord of life. We trace the descent step by step to the last rung of the ladder; by one stupendous act (Rom. i. 4) God graced His Son with unique honour and dignity (Eph. i. 21).

Ver. 10. **That at the name of Jesus.**—Not at the mention of the name Jesus, but *in* the name of Jesus. For illustration of the phrase see Christ's own words, "in My name" (John xiv. 13, 14, etc.). **Every knee should bow.**—The outward symbol of an inward submission or recognition of superiority. By what language could the apostle express the exaltation above creaturely needs if not by this? If used of a creature, it would be blasphemous. The jealous God does not allow bowing down in worship to any but Himself. As Pliny said, *Quasi Deo.*

Ver. 11. **Should confess.**—"Proclaim with thanksgiving" (*Lightfoot*). It is the word which describes the frank admission [of wrong, Matt. iii. 6]. **That Jesus Christ is Lord.**—The emphasis is on "Lord." The specific Christian profession of faith is "Jesus is Lord"; its opposite, "Anathema Jesus" (1 Cor. xii. 3 and Rom. x. 9).

Ver. 12. **Ye have always obeyed.**—Obedience describes the attitude of the mind of these Philippians in presence of the commanding truths of the gospel: "Obedience" or "obedience of faith" is found several times in the epistle to the Romans; and in 2 Cor. vii. 15 stands in close connection with "fear and trembling," as here. **Fear and trembling.**—Such an apprehensive desire to be right with God as is figured by bodily tremor.

Ver. 13. **For it is God which worketh in you.**—This sentence removes all merit from the most punctilious diligence, whilst it as effectually takes away the paralysing fear of failure to which "workers together with God" need never give place.

Ver. 14. **Do all things without murmurings.**—Without mutterings, as men who in cowardice dare not speak plainly what they think. We must consider the warning as against God on account of what He imposed on them both to do and to suffer. **And disputings.**—The word goes much deeper than the restricted meaning of "disputings." It seems here to mean without first entering upon scrupulous considerings as to whether you are under any obligation thereto, whether it is not too difficult, whether prudent, and the like (*Meyer*).

Ver. 15. **That ye may be blameless.**—Sons of God they are already; they are now to become worthy sons. In the word "blameless" we have the idea of a character in which no grace is defective (Heb. viii. 7 is a good illustration. If the first covenant had been *faultless*, a second would have been superfluous). **And harmless.**—Christ's own counsel. "Be harmless as doves." Lit. the word means unmixed, unadulterated, and figuratively, artless. Of sophistries and the deep things of Satan he would rather they were in happy ignorance (Matt. x. 16; Rom. xvi. 19). **Without rebuke.**—Vulgate, "immaculatum." The word is originally a sacrificial term. It describes the victim in which the keen inquisitorial eye of the official inspector has found no fault. So (1 Pet. i. 19) of the Lamb of God, in the whiteness of spotless innocency. **Crooked and perverse generation.**—St. Peter uses the former word in his indictment of the men of his own day (Acts ii. 40), and to describe cross-tempered masters (1 Pet. ii. 18). The Rabbins take the term "perverse" as used in Eccles. vii. 13 (LXX.) to denote those bodily deformed. Here, as in our Lord's use (Matt. xvii. 17), of a moral nature all warped and knotted. **Ye shine as lights in the world.**—R.V. "ye are seen." A metaphor from the heavenly luminaries (Gen. i. 14, 16; Matt. v. 14).

Ver. 16. **Holding forth the word of life.**—"If we are to look for any metaphor it would most naturally be that of offering food or wine" (*Lightfoot*). Why it should be at all events wholly unconnected with the preceding image in "lights in the world" one does not quite see. There is nothing objectionable in the thought of a star holding forth its beam to the mariner, or the benighted wayfarer, and it has the advantage of continuity of the metaphor in the verse previous. **That I may rejoice in the day of Christ.**—As good news of his convert's fidelity was like a new lease of life to the worn apostle (1 Thess. iii. 8), so his sweetest hope was to be able to stand before his Lord with his children by his side. **Have not run . . . laboured.**—Athletic terms familiar to St. Paul's readers.

Ver. 17. **If I be offered upon the sacrifice.**—R.V. margin, "poured out as a drink-offering." Whether the reference is to the cup of wine poured over the heathen sacrifice or the drink-offering of the Jewish is doubted, and is of little consequence, since in either case his meaning would be clear enough. **And service.**—Priestly function (Luke i. 23).

Ver. 20. **No man likeminded.**—A.V. margin, "so dear unto me," evidently because the same word is used in Ps. lv. 13. "Likeminded" with whom? "With me," says Meyer, that is, "having the same tender feeling towards you as I have." **Who will naturally care.**—Not of necessity, nor grudgingly.

Ver. 21. **All seek their own.**—Interpret how we will, this is a bitter sentence. We are apt to be severe on those who have other engagements when we feel our need of friends.

Ver. 22. **Ye know the proof.**—The character that shows itself under strain or testing

(Acts xvi. 1 and xvii. 14, xix. 22, xx. 3, 4). **As a son with the father.**—R.V. "as a child serveth." The older man and the younger had slaved for the gospel; as for some dear object of desire a father and his son may be seen at work together.

Ver. 24. **I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.**—The apostle, in personal matters, is on the same footing with the most obscure Christian. When his friends forsake him he must bear it with what fortitude he can. When darkness surrounds him he must wait God's time—no prophecy lifts the veil.

Ver. 25. **Epaphroditus.**—Brother, work-mate, comrade-in-arms, Church-messenger, and serving-man. What a designation! St. Paul thinks him worthy of all the honour (ver. 29) that the Church can give, and he himself immortalises him by this unusual estimate of his personal character and work.

Ver. 26. **Was full of heaviness.**—The same word is used of our Lord when in Gethsemane—"He began to be very heavy." Its etymology is an open question. Grimm, following Buttmann, says it means "the uncomfortable feeling of one who is not at home." If this, the almost universally accepted derivation be the correct one, it is a beautiful idyll we have presented to us. A convalescent, far from home, as his strength returns feels the pangs of home-sickness strengthen and eagerly returns to dispel the misgivings of those made anxious by tidings of his critical illness.

Ver. 27. **Nigh unto death.**—Or as we say colloquially, "next door to death." **God had mercy on him.**—St. Paul speaks after the manner of men, as we could not have dared to say anything else if Epaphroditus had died. The cry of woe so often heard by Christ was "have mercy." **Sorrow upon sorrow.**—"He does not parade the apathy of the Stoics, as though he were iron and far removed from human affections" (*Calvin*).

> "When sorrows come they come not single spies,
> But in battalions."

Ver. 28. **The more carefully.**—R.V. "diligently." "With increased eagerness" (*Lightfoot*). How difficult it must have been for St. Paul to relinquish the company of so worthy a man we do not realise; but he who gives up is worthy of the friend he gives up, for neither of them is consulting his own wishes. "Love seeketh not her own." What a contrast to sordid Hedonism—old or new! **Ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.**—A variation on the theme of the letter—the sum of which is, as Bengel says, "I rejoice; rejoice ye." What an exquisitely chosen form of expression! "A prior sorrow will still remain unremoved," says Lightfoot; "but if he cannot go so far as to say he will rejoice, the alleviation of the loss of such a friend's society is the fact that they have him again."

Ver. 29. **Hold such in honour.**—Learn to know the value of such—"grapple them to thy soul with hooks of steel."

Ver. 30. **For the work of Christ.**—What noble self-oblivion the apostle manifests! He thinks more of the cause dear to his heart than of his own comfort or even life. **Not regarding his life.**—R.V. "hazarding his life." There is the difference of a single letter in the long word of the R.V. The word of the R.V. means "having gambled with his life." Just as to-day a visitor to Rome in the autumn must run the risk of malarial fever, so Epaphroditus, for the work of Christ, had faced that, and other dangers as great, probably. The A.V. would mean "as far as his life was concerned he followed an ill-advised course of action." **To supply your lack of service toward me.**—Does not mean that they had been remiss in their attention. They did not lack the will, but the opportunity.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—4.

Christian Unity an Occasion of Joy.

I. Christian unity is a striving after the Spirit of Christ.—"That ye be likeminded" (ver. 2).

1. *Manifested in loving consolation to those in distress.*—"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love" (ver. 1). If the pagan expressed unity by those who dwelt in one village and drank of one fountain, how much more real is the union of those who drink of the same Spirit and practise the lovingkindness of the one Christ. A striking evidence of the unity of Christianity is seen in its sympathy everywhere for the poor, the sick, and the unfortunate. It is Christ-like to comfort and help the distressed.

2. *Manifested in spiritual fellowship.*—"If any fellowship of the Spirit" (ver. 1). Christians are one by their communion together, flowing from their joint participation in the same Spirit. The union of hearts is more real and

stable than the external union expressed by creeds and contracts. The Spirit is the unifying power of Christendom.

3. *Manifested in compassion for the suffering.*—"If any bowels and mercies" (ver. 1). Christianity is a mission to the suffering. Before the Christian era there were no hospitals and infirmaries, no care for the afflicted poor. Unselfish benevolence was almost unknown. Nothing is more remarkable than the spirit of tender compassion that Christianity has breathed into social and national life.

II. **Christianity is opposed to a spirit of faction and empty boasting.**—"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory" (ver. 3). The message of the gospel is one of peace and goodwill to all men. It is foreign to its spirit to exalt the interests of party or of self; it seeks to promote a universal and all-pervasive charity. The Germans have a legend connected with the terrific battle of Chalons between the Visigoths and the Romans against Attila. The bloody work of the sword was done, the plain was strewn with heaps of the slain; but for three nights following—so ran the story—the spirits of the slain hovered over the scene and continued the strife in the air. The like has been done again and again in the party strifes and controversies of the Church. Unity is impossible where contention and vanity have sway.

III. **Christian unity is strengthened by the maintenance of a humble spirit.**—1. *In comparing oneself with others.* "In lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (ver. 3). The man who walks humbly with God, realising his complete dependence on Him, will not unduly exalt himself, and will highly esteem others, as knowing that they are equally with himself dependent on God for their abilities. Instead of fixing your eyes on those points in which you may excel, fix them on those in which your neighbour excels you: to do this is true humility. The excellencies of others are better known than their defects, and our own defects are better known to ourselves than to others. A sense of personal short-coming will keep us humble. Humility is a special product of Christianity. The whole Roman language, with all the improvements of the Augustan age, does not afford so much as a name for humility; nor was one found in all the copious language of the Greeks, till it was made by the great apostle.

2. *In considering other people's interests as well as your own.*—"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (ver. 4) The truly humble are thoroughly disinterested. The work of the meek and lowly Jesus is the loftiest example of disinterestedness. He looked to the things of others rather than to His own. In unselfishly seeking the good of others we promote our own. When Augustine was asked, "What is the first thing in religion?" he answered, "Humility." "What is the second?" "Humility." "And what is the third?" "Humility." Speaking of pride, Augustine truly said, "That which first overcame man is the last thing he overcomes." Humility is a strong bond of Christian unity.

IV. **Christian unity is an occasion of great joy.**—"Fulfil ye my joy" (ver. 2). The weak spot in the disposition of the Philippians was a tendency to quarrelsomeness; hence he insists upon unity. They had given him joy in the other Christian excellencies they possessed; he asks them to complete his joy in cherishing the grace of unity. "Behold," exclaimed tho rejoicing Psalmist, as he contemplated the union of the Jewish tribes, "how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The bundle of arrows cannot be broken while it remains a bundle. Tacitus, an ancient Latin historian, says of the Germans, what sceptics and others find true of Christians, "Whilst fighting separately, all are conquered together." The strength of the Christian Church lies in its consolidation.

Lessons.—1. *Christian unity is of supreme importance.* 2. *Is absolutely necessary to represent the Spirit of Christ.* 3. *Is the cause of much joy to the anxious minister.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1, 2. *Unity and Concord in the Church.*—1. As unity and concord is necessary in itself and at all times, so is it most necessary in suffering times: the enjoyment of Christ's presence, the reaping of any spiritual advantage by the communion and love of the saints, fellowship with God through the operation of the Spirit, depend upon it. 2. The success of the gospel will be matter of joy to a public-spirited Christian, even in the midst of his own crosses and sufferings. 3. That unity and concord among the Churches may be solid and lasting, there should be unity of will and affections, of designs and endeavours, and in opinion and matters of judgment.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 3. *Humility an Antidote to Contention.*—1. The lust of vainglory, whereby a man pursues more after the applause of men than to be approved of God, is the mother of contention and strife, and unfriendly to union and peace. 2. The grace of humility does not consist in an affected strain of words and gestures, but, being seated in the heart, makes a man think meanly of himself and of anything that is his. 3. So conscious should we be of our own infirmities, so modest in the esteem of our own graces and virtues, so prone to charity, that we ought to esteem any other, for what we know of him, to be better than ourselves.—*Ibid.*

Ver. 4. *Looking on the Things of Others.*

I. **One school in which we learn the lesson of unselfishness is the home circle.**

II. **Another way in which God teaches us the same lesson is through the experience we gain in the intercourse of daily work.**—We divide men into the selfish and the unselfish—those who work for self and think of self, and those whose labours are for other men.

III. **We are taught to consider other men by th perplexities and confusion which arise when we think only of ourselves.**—The modern philosophy is true so far when it says that man is nothing in himself, but only a bundle of relations, the meeting-point of many influences. Those who fix their attention upon the meeting-point forget what makes the man. Probably there is no more confused or miserable man than the self-analyst.—*A. R. MacEwen.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 5—8.

The Humiliation of Christ a Pattern of Supreme Unselfishness.

I. **The humiliation of Christ was no violation of His divine essence.**—"Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (ver. 6). Thought it not a prey to be seized upon. As He was in Himself truly and properly God, it could be no object of desire or ambition to claim equality with God. Being God He could not undeify Himself. His divinity remained with Him through the whole course of His self-imposed humiliation. It was this that constituted both the mystery and the greatness of the humiliation.

II. **The humiliation of Christ was a voluntary incarnation in human form.**—"But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (ver. 7). He emptied Himself, not of His

divinity—that was impossible—but of the outward and self-manifesting glories of the Godhead. He took the form of a servant by being made in the likeness of man. He remained full of divinity, yet He bore Himself as if He were empty. A native preacher among the Oneidas, addressing his fellow-converts, said: "What are the views you form of the character of Jesus? You will answer, perhaps, that He was a man of singular benevolence. You will tell me that He proved this to be His character by the nature of the miracles He wrought. He created bread to feed thousands who were ready to perish. He raised to life the son of a poor woman who was a widow, and to whom his labours were necessary for her support in old age. Are these then your only views of the Saviour? I will tell you they are lame. When Jesus came into the world He threw His blanket around Him, but the God was within."

III. **The humiliation of Christ reached its climax in a career of obedience even unto death.**—"He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (ver. 8). He fulfilled all the demands of law and of God. He shrank not from death—death in its most shameful and ignoble form, the death of the cross. He was numbered with the transgressors—not an honourable death, but like the degrading execution of criminals. He went to the realm of the dead and revolutionised it. Hitherto death had reigned supreme, an unbroken power. The prison-house of the dead was fast locked. None returned. Now One comes there who has the keys of Hades and of death. He opens the door and sets the captives free. "Meekness in suffering, prayer for His murderers, a faithful resignation of His soul into the hands of His heavenly Father, the sun eclipsed, the heavens darkened, the earth trembling, the graves open, the rocks rent, the veil of the Temple torn—who could say less than this, 'Truly, this was the Son of God'? He suffers patiently; this is through the power of grace; many good men have done so through His enabling. The frame of nature suffers with Him; this is proper to the God of Nature, the Son of God" (*Bishop Hall*).

IV. **The humiliation of Christ is an example of unselfishness to all His followers.**—"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (ver. 5). The apostle does not put forth himself as an example, but Christ. Christ gave His all for us, and we should give our all to Him, and our best service for the good of others. No one can follow Christ until he has first found Christ. Some try to imitate Christ before they have savingly found Him. To look at Christ as our Example only, and not as our Redeemer, is not to see Him as He is. Without faith in Christ as our Redeemer we cannot really follow His example. Without the grace of Christ there can be no imitation of Christ. A little girl once presented to a celebrated statesman a small bouquet of ordinary flowers, the only one she could procure at the season. He inquired why she gave him the bouquet. "Because I love you," the child answered. "Do you bring any little gifts to Jesus?" he asked. "Oh," said the child, "I give myself to Him."

Lessons.—1. *The unselfish are always humble.* 2. *The humble are patient in doing and suffering.* 3. *Humility is the pathway of exaltation.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 5-8. *The Incarnate Deity.*

I. **That Christ did not seek to retain an appearance of divine glory and co-equality.**

II. **He divested Himself actually of His appropriate and descriptive ensigns of divine nature and government.**

III. **He entered upon a course of responsible subordination.**

IV. **He united Himself to human nature by a perfect incarnation.**

V. **He stooped to the most extreme depression of state.**

VI. **He reduced Himself to the necessity of death.**

VII. **He yielded to death in a peculiar form.**

Lessons.—1. *How admirable is the expedient of the Redeemer's incarnation!* 2. *What a sublime example does the conduct of the Saviour afford.—R. W. Hamilton.*

Ver. 5. *The Christian Temper the Same Mind which was in Christ.*

I. **Some things in which we cannot consider Christ as an example.**—All those graces in us which suppose our guilt and fallen state could not be exemplified to us by our Saviour.

II. **Some things related of Christ we must not pretend to imitate.**—What He did under the character of Messiah was peculiar to Himself, and not designed to put us on doing likewise.

III. **Why Christians should copy the mind and temper of Christ.**—1. *It was the design of God to set His Son before us as the model of the Christian temper.* 2. *He was a pattern admirably fitted to be proposed to our imitation.* (1) He was an example in our own nature. (2) His circumstances and conduct in our nature adapted His example to the most general use. (3) His example was perfect, so that it has the force of a rule. 3. *The relations in which we stand to Christ and the concern we have with Him lay us under the strongest engagements to endeavour a resemblance.* He is our friend, our Lord and Master, our Head, our Judge, the model of our final happiness.

Lessons. — 1. *Christianity in its main design is a practical thing.* 2. *We see the advantages we have by the gospel beyond any other dispensation for true goodness.* 3. *How inexcusable must they be who are not recovered to a godlike temper and conversation by this most excellent dispensation!* 4. *With what care and attention should we study the life of Christ!—J. Evans, D.D.*

Christ our Pattern.

I. **The mind of Christ was a pure mind.**

II. **A self-sacrificing mind.**

III. **A lowly mind.**

IV. **A forbearing mind.**

V. **A constant mind.**

VI. **A prayerful mind.**— *Preacher's Magazine.*

Vers. 6, 7. *Christ the Redeemer.*—This which the Son of God did and underwent is the one fact of heaven and earth, with which none in creation, none in history, none in your own personal being, can for a moment be compared, but in the presence and in the light of which all these ought to be contemplated and concluded—that it is the great object of faith and practice. Of faith—for upon the personal and hearty reception of it as the foundation of your life before God, that life itself, and all its prospects, depend; of practice—for high above all other examples, shining over and blessing while it surpasses them, is this mighty example of the Son of God. Oh, brethren, how the selfish man and the selfish woman and the selfish family ought to depart from such a theme as this, downcast for very shame, and abased at their unlikeness to the pattern which they profess to be imitating! Oh that this question might be fixed and rankle like a dart in their bosoms, even till it will take no answer but the surrender of the life to Him, and, by the daily grace of His Spirit, living as He lived!—*Alford.*

Ver. 8. *Christ's Crucifixion*—

I. **As an historical fact.**—It is quite certain.

II. **As displaying in its circumstances every variety of human character.**

III. **As accompanied by striking prodigies.**— The darkened sun, the quaking earth, the cleft rocks, the rent veil, the opened graves.

IV. **As furnishing an illustrious example of the passive virtues** — Taught us how to suffer and to die.

V. **As being the brightest manifestation of self-denying and self-devoting love.**

VI. **As constituting the sole meritorious cause of human salvation.**—Who is the sufferer? The Son of God. Why does He suffer? As a prophet, as a martyr, as an example? Yes; but chiefly as a sacrifice for sin.

VII. **As producing the most wonderful moral transformations.** — On individuals, on communities, and on Christendom.—*G. Brooks.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9—11.

The Exaltation of Christ—

I. **Was a divine act.**—"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him" ver. 9). As a recognition of the humiliation and obedience of Christ, God exalted Him to the throne of mediatorial sovereignty. As Bengel puts it, "Christ emptied Christ; God exalted Christ as man to equality with God" (Compare Ps. viii. 5, 6, cx. 1, 7; Matt. xxviii. 18; Luke xxiv. 26; John v. 27, x. 17; Rom. xiv. 9; Eph. i. 20-22; Heb. ii. 9).

II. **Was the acquisition of a name of pre-eminent dignity and significance.**—"And given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus" (vers. 9, 10). Jesus is the same as Joshua, or Jehoshua, only framed to the Greek pronunciation and termination. Joshua, who brought the hosts of Israel into the rest of Canaan, was originally called Hoshea, but it was changed into Joshua or Jehoshua, by an addition of the first syllable in the divine name Jehovah, perhaps to intimate that not Joshua of himself, but Jehovah by him, would complete the deliverance and rest of Israel. The name Jesus means Jehovah-Saviour, or Jehovah-Salvation, and Jesus is so called because He saves His people from their sins. The name cannot be given to any other being; it belongs solely and absolutely to the one Jesus. "Here we should probably look," says Lightfoot, "to a common Hebrew sense of name, not meaning a definite appellation, but denoting office, rank, dignity. In this case the use of the name of God in the Old Testament to denote the divine Presence or the divine Majesty, more especially as the object of adoration and praise, will suggest the true meaning; since the context dwells on the honour and worship henceforth offered to Him on whom *the* name has been conferred. To praise *the name*, to bless *the name*, to fear *the name* of God, are frequent expressions in the Old Testament." The name of Jesus marks the pre-eminence of Jesus—it is the "name above every name." That name wields the mightiest power in the world to-day. A modern writer of reputation has said: "There is a wave—I believe it is only a wave—passing over the cultivated thought of Europe at present, which will make short work of all belief in a God that does not grip fast to Jesus Christ. As far as I can read the signs of the times and the tendency of modern thinking, it is this—either an absolute silence, a heaven stretching above us, blue and clear and cold, and far away and dumb; or else a Christ that speaks—He or none. The theism that has shaken itself loose from Him will be crushed, I am sure, in the encounter with the agnosticism and materialism of this day." The name of the exalted Jesus is the salvation of the world in more senses than one.

III. **Entitles him to universal homage.**—"Every knee shall bow . . . and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (vers. 10, 11). Beings above, below, and on the earth shall acknowledge the supremacy and deity of Jesus, and unite in a universal and consentaneous act of praise and worship of His divine majesty. On the door of the old mosque in Damascus, once a Christian church, but now ranked among the holiest of the Mahometan sanctuaries, are inscribed these remarkable words: "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." For more than twelve

hundred years the inscription has remained unimpaired by time and undisturbed by man. What is it waiting for? Already a Christian Church has been founded in that ancient city, and the gospel is preached there every Sabbath. The world's submission to Jesus is drawing near.

Lessons.—*The name of Jesus*—1. *Is unique in its reputation.* 2. *In its moral influence among the nations.* 3. *In its saving power.* 4. *In the homage paid to it.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 9-11. *The Name of Jesus: its Exaltation and Power.*

I. **The Saviour's exaltation** (ver. 9).—He was exalted by His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, and His glorious session at the right hand of God, whence He now discharges the high functions of Prophet, Priest, and King.

II. **The Saviour's name.**—"That at the name of Jesus" (ver. 10). Jehovah, the Saviour.

1. *The supreme eminence of the name.*—"A name which is above every name."

2. *Pre-eminent because no other being could receive the title.*

3. *Pre-eminent because there is no other name that has the mysterious virtue of saving as this.*

III. **The power of the Saviour's name.**—1. *In saving the sinner.* 2. *In commanding the homage and worship of all, and in eliciting the universal acknowledgment of His deity* (vers. 10, 11).

We learn a lesson of humility.—1. *Because Christ humbled Himself for us.* 2. *We should humble ourselves on account of past sins.* 3. *Humility leads to exaltation.*

Christ Worthy of Universal Homage.—1. The Lord Christ, having abased Himself for our redemption, was exalted by the Father to the highest pitch of glory. 2. The name which is above every name is said to be given to Christ, because His divine majesty, before hid, was now manifested and the human nature so highly honoured that that person who is man is true God, and is to be acknowledged as such. 3. However small a part of the world acknowledge Christ to be the Lord, His glory will grow till all reasonable creatures in heaven, earth, and hell subject themselves to Him, and the giving of divine honour to Him does in no way impair the glory of God the Father.—*Fergusson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12, 13.

Salvation—God's Work and Man's Care.

I. **Salvation is a personal blessing.**—"Your own salvation" (ver. 12). If Christ died for all, then He died for me and I may be saved. It matters little if others are being saved unless I am saved myself. It is impossible to be genuinely interested in the salvation of others unless we are saved ourselves. Salvation deals with the individual; it gathers its trophies one by one. "I have read of some seas," writes Bunyan, "so pure and clear that a man may see the bottom, though they be forty feet deep. I know this river is a deep river, but it is not said that we can see no bottom." The comparison implies that a man with good eyes may see the bottom. So, then, we shall look down through these crystal streams and see what be at the bottom of all. The bottom of all is that we might be saved. "These things I say," saith Christ, "that ye might be saved." What a good, sound bottom is here! This salvation admits man to a wealth of blessings impossible to estimate. Salvation should therefore be sought by every man earnestly, believingly, promptly.

II. **Salvation needs constant personal care.**—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (ver. 12).

1. *The Christian worker is surrounded with spiritual perils.*—The apostle has referred to these perils in warning the Philippians against pride, selfishness, faction, and vain boasting (vers. 3, 4). To secure his salvation the believer must not only work, but work with circumspection, with vigilance, with fear and trembling. "God does not give the flower and the fruit of salvation, but the seed, the sunshine, and the rain. He does not give houses, nor yet beams and squared stones, but trees, rocks, and limestone, and says, 'Now build thyself a house.' Regard not God's work within thee as an anchor to hold thy bark firmly to the shore, but as a sail which shall carry it to its port. Fear thy depression and faint-heartedness, but take courage at thy humility before God" (*Lange*).

2. *Personal care the more necessary when deprived of the oversight of a loved teacher.*—"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence" (ver. 12). The Philippians had shown a spirit of ready obedience both to the apostle and to God, and they are urged to increased diligence. The apostle's "absence did not make the obligation less imperative, but it demanded more earnestness and vigilance from them in the discharge of the duty. His voice and person were a guide and stimulant and excited them to assiduous labour, so that his presence among them wrought like a charm. And now that he was not with them, and they were left to themselves, they were so much the more to double their diligence and work out salvation with fear and trembling—with distrust of themselves, earnest solicitude in every duty, humble reliance on divine aid, with the abiding consciousness that after all they come far short of meeting obligation" (*Eadie*).

III. **Salvation is a divine work.**—1. *God is pleased to work in us to create a right disposition.*—"It is God that worketh in you to will . . . of His good pleasure" (ver. 13). The desire for salvation and the disposition and will to seek it come from God. As the sun warms the earth and helps the flower to grow and bloom, so the Spirit of God warms the heart and calls forth the growth and blossom of Christian graces. God does not take out mental and moral apparati and put in a new set, like the works of a clock; but He encourages us to use the powers already within and breathes upon us the vitalising influence of His Spirit, so that we produce results in harmony with His will.

2. *God is pleased to work in us to confer the moral ability to work.*—"God worketh in you . . . to do of His good pleasure" (ver. 13). Some men have ability to do great things, but have not the disposition; others may have the disposition, but not the ability. In the work of our salvation God gives both the disposition and the power. Because God works in us we may work; because He works in us we must work out our own salvation. The means of salvation are within our reach; it is our part to use them. How does the miner get out of the pit? There is a string at the bottom; he pulls it; a bell at the top rings; a rope, worked by a steam-engine, is let down, and in this way he ascends to the top. A man gets down into the pit of trouble; he cannot get up himself; he must ring the bell of prayer; God will hear it and send down the rope that is to lift him out. Man can do nothing without God, and God will do nothing without the willing co-operation of man.

Lessons.—1. *Salvation is possible for every man.* 2. *Salvation may be secured by man yielding to the divine influences working within him.* 3. *If man is not saved, it is his own fault.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 12, 13. *Divine and Human Co-operation in Man's Salvation.*

I. **The salvation to be wrought out.**—Salvation simply means deliverance. It may be either temporal or spiritual, or both. The process of salvation is to be continuous.

II. **In the work of our salvation divine and human co-operation is necessary.**—Illustrated in the products of nature, in works of art and skill. 1. *God works in us by the light of His truth.* 2. *By appealing to us with the influence of powerful motives.* 3. *Works in us by the influences of His Spirit.*

III. **Seek to ascertain to what extent we are indebted for our personal salvation to God working in us.**—Our salvation from first to last is from God; that we are saved by grace, yet not so as to destroy our own effort. He produces in us the will and power. We are to exercise the will and power by repenting, believing, and living a life of holiness.

IV. **Why we are to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.**—Because of the possibility of our unfaithfulness. May be too sure of salvation, and too doubtful.—*J. C. Symons.*

The Active Exertion of Man in working out his Salvation harmonises with the Free Grace of God as being the Sole Author of it.—There are two facts connected with the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt—their preservation in the wilderness, and their settlement in the land of Canaan—to which I would solicit your attention.

I. **That all was done for them by God, and is to be ascribed solely, from first to last, to His almighty power and grace.**—1. The means by which the establishment of the Israelites in the promised land was effected were evidently beyond the reach of human agency. 2. Even in those particular cases in which the active exertions of the Israelites were employed as the means of their deliverance or success the whole is ascribed to God. (1) He gave them courage to fight against their enemies; (2) He gave them success by sending terror into the hearts of their enemies.

II. **That although God thus did everything for them, He did it in such a way as to bring every power of their minds and bodies into exercise, and to render their own activity absolutely necessary to their preservation and success.**—Illustrated in the passage of the Red Sea, and in the first battle of the Israelites with the Amalekites (Exod. xvii. 8).

Lessons.—1. *As the deliverance of the Israelites and their establishment in Canaan was wholly of God, so the salvation of every sinner is to be ascribed solely and entirely to His mercy and power.* 2. *As God required the Israelites to be active, watchful, diligent, ardent, and strenuous in their exertions to overcome difficulties and to defeat their enemies, so He requires His people to make their calling and election sure, to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.*—Although God does all for us in the matter of our salvation, yet He places us in situations where we must exert ourselves or perish.—*Anonymous.*

The Co-operation of Human and Divine Agency in our Salvation.

I. **This co-operation of divine and human energies has place in all the most important facts and pursuits that make up the history of man.**—1. *It is true of the commencement of our being.* 2. *Our growth and education are the result of the same joint agency.* 3. *This fundamental law reigns over all the works of man.*

II. **What does God accomplish and what does He demand of us in the joint working out of our salvation?**—1. *God works in us by the light of His truth.* 2. *By the power of motives.* 3. *By the energy of His Spirit.*

III. **What is the intent and object of these divine operations?**—1. *They are not designed to transform the character as, when after conversion, they are media of sanctification.* 2. *Human co-operation is the indispensable condition of progress.* 3. *Will and do.* These describe the duty of the unconverted man.—*S. Olin, D.D.*

Man's Work and God's Work.

I. **This salvation is begun when we believe in Christ, but it requires to be worked out.**

II. **The fact that God works in us renders our working possible.**

III. **The fact that God works in us should make us fear and tremble.**—*R. Abercrombie, M.A.*

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

The Lustre of a Blameless Life—

I. **Suppresses all murmuring and doubt as unworthy of the children of God.**—"Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke" (vers. 14, 15). As the sons of God, distinguished by so high and holy a calling, believers should be blameless and pure. Their spiritual integrity should lift them above the cause of blame. To be pure and blameless they must not yield to the spirit of dissatisfaction and doubt. "No matter what may tend to excite this spirit, it must not be indulged, whether the temptation to it be the divine command, the nature of the duty, the self-denial it involves, or the opposition occasionally encountered. There was neither grudge nor reluctance with Him whose example is described in the preceding verses, no murmur at the depth of His condescension, or doubt as to the amount or severity of the sufferings which for others He so willingly endured" (*Eadie*).

II. **Sheds a guiding light in the midst of a dark world.**—"In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life" (vers. 15, 16). The Philippians were to be a light and guide to their fellow-citizens, a people made up of Jew and pagan, moved by tortuous and perverse impulses. Nothing would please them: give them one argument, they cry for another; tell them of the simplicity of the gospel, they prefer you should dwell on its mysteries; speak of its power, they ask you to expound its charity. The children of God are to society everywhere what the heavenly luminaries are to the world—they are to diffuse light, and guide the way to a better life. The star which led the wise men to Christ, the pillar of fire which led the children of Israel into Canaan, did not only shine, but went before them. Believers shine by the light of the word which they hold forth, and that light is the guide to others. Virtue should shine in cities, not in solitudes. The Christian's duty is here among men; and the nearer he draws to his fellow-men, so that his religion be real and true, the more good he is likely to do them. On the north coast of Cornwall and Devon is a lighthouse, which first of all was placed high upon the cliffs, where the mists and fogs often obscured and hid its brightness from the passing mariner in hours of the sorest need. So they took it down and built it afresh on the rock out at sea, amid the waves of that dangerous coast, there to shine where it was most necessary.

III. **Supplies a prolific theme of ministerial joy.**—1. *A joy complete when his work is finally appraised.* "That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain" (ver. 16). The apostle had run with the eagerness of a racer in the Isthmian games—the prizes he sought, the souls of men; he had laboured with strenuous and persevering diligence—the wages he sought, the souls of men; and now looking by anticipation at the results of his apostolic toil, in the light of the great day of Christ, his greatest joy will be that his efforts have not been in vain. His joy then will be, not in the

number and wealth of the Churches he founded, but in the spiritual progress and advancement of the members. The results of work for Christ are often in this world obscured and confused; but in the day of Christ all will be clear and the work seen in all its beauty and dimensions. The joy of success is often checkered and interrupted in this life; but yonder the joy will be complete and full. We shall share the joy of the conquering Christ.

2. *A joy not diminished though life is prematurely sacrificed.*—"Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (ver. 17). The apostle's image is that of an altar, on which the faith of the Philippians is laid by him as priest, while his own blood is being poured out as the usual drink-offering or libation. In the near prospect of martyrdom he has no gloomy anticipations. Death will not terminate his joy, but accelerate it, as it will admit him to realms where all is calm and joy and peace. Such is the triumph of the Christian spirit; it can rejoice in tribulation and in the very presence of death.

3. *A joy in which his converts may share.*—"For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me" (ver. 18). So far from being dispirited by the prospect of his martyrdom, the apostle calls upon them to share his joy on account of the success of the gospel. How often in the changeful experiences of life are joy and sorrow mingled together. "Joy lives in the midst of the sorrow; the sorrow springs from the same root as the gladness. The two do not clash against each other, or reduce the emotion to a neutral indifference, but they blend into one another, just as in the Arctic regions, deep down beneath the cold snow with its white desolation and its barren death, you shall find the budding of the early spring flowers and the fresh green grass; just as some kinds of fire burn below the water; just as in the midst of the barren and undrinkable sea there may be welling up some little fountain of fresh water that comes from a deeper depth than the great ocean around it and pours its sweet streams along the surface of the salt waste" (*Maclaren*).

Lessons.—1. *A blameless life is the product of the grace of God.* 2. *Is a rebuke to the wavering and inconsistent.* 3. *Evokes the congratulations of the good in both worlds.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 15, 16. *Christians Examples to the World.*—1. Divisions and strife grieve the Spirit and darken those evidences of sonship which believers in a calm and peaceful temper of spirit used to see most clearly. 2. We stop the mouths of enemies when our conversation is such as may discover to others their failings, and point out that good way wherein they ought to walk. 3. *Suitable* practice joined with profession puts such a majesty and splendour on truth that every Christian is to profane men as the sun and moon are in the firmament. 4. The glory put on gracious souls at the day of judgment will add to the glory and joy of faithful ministers.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 16. *The Word of Life: a Living Ministry and a Living Church.*

I. **To apprehend the life of the Church we must apprehend the life of its Head.**

II. **A living ministry.**—1. *Requires confidence in the office and work itself.* 2. *Distinctness of purpose.* 3. *A quick and profound sense of the nature and dignity of the soul.* 4. *One that preaches more than moral decency*: preaches piety, regeneration, and faith. 5. *Must not be afraid to assert what passes its own reason.*

III. **A living Church.**—1. *A safeguard against dogmatism.* 2. *Formalism.* 3. *Partisanship.* 4. *Is a body whose life is the life of Christ in the soul.*—*F. D. Huntington, D.D.*

Vers. 16-18. *The Joy of Ministerial Success—*

I. **Sustained by the assurance of the final approval of his heavenly Master.**—"That I may rejoice in the day of Christ" (ver. 16).

II. **Cheerfully sacrifices life itself in the successful prosecution of his work.**—"Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (ver. 17).

III. **Shared by those who profit by his ministry.**—"For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me" (ver. 18).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 19—24.

A Projected Christian Mission—

I. **Prompted by anxiety to promote the spiritual welfare of the Church.**—"But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state" (ver. 19). We have already gathered, from our study of this epistle thus far, that the apostle was solicitous about the spiritual state of the Philippian Church; and this visit of Timothy was preparatory to his own coming to see them. He turns from the sadder side of his own likely martyrdom to the more hopeful prospect of once more being in their midst. The true minister of Christ can never forget his people, whether present among them or absent; and his principal anxiety is to know that they are growing in grace and Christian usefulness. He seeks to keep in touch with them by letters or personal messengers, and the theme of his communications will be based on their mutual interest in the cause of Christ. His movements and wishes concerning them are all based on the will of Christ.

II. **Committed to a trustworthy messenger.**—1. *A messenger in genuine sympathy with the anxiety of the sender.* "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state" (ver. 20). Timothy is of such a nature, has a soul so like my own, that when he comes among you he will manifest a true regard for your best interests. This choice evangelist was a native of Lycaonia, in the centre of Asia Minor. Faithfully and lovingly taught by his mother, a pious Jewess, to long and look for the Messiah promised to the fathers, he was led, on Paul's first visit to these regions, to recognise in Jesus of Nazareth the great Deliverer and to accept Him as his Saviour. On the apostle's second visit, four or five years afterwards, finding Timothy highly commended by the Christians of the district, he took him as his companion, to give such aid in missionary work as a young man could, and to be trained for full efficiency as a preacher of the cross. From that time onward we find him in constant connection with the apostle, either as his companion or as carrying on some special ministerial work which Paul had entrusted to him. His close fellowship with the apostle gave him opportunites of becoming familiar with the great reading themes of the gospel, and with the high aims and motives with which his teacher was constantly animated.

2. *A messenger free from a self-seeking spirit.*—"For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (ver. 21). Among the other members of the Church likely to be entrusted with such a mission there was no one like Timothy—so devoted, so whole-hearted, so unselfish. The early Church was not less free from imperfections than the modern Church; the self-seeking spirit is as permanent as human nature. When a certain bishop was asked by an acquaintance what was the best body of divinity, he did not scruple to answer, "That which can help a man to keep a coach and six horses."

3. *A messenger whose fidelity has been tested.*—"But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel" (ver. 22). Paul does not say that Timothy served him—though that was true—but served

with him in the gospel, showing filial affection and willing obedience. The simplicity and unselfishness, the mellow Christian wisdom, the patience and gentleness of the apostle, fitted in with a charming meekness, unselfishness, and affectionateness in his young friend. The apostle watched with joy the maturing grace of his beloved companion and fellow-labourer; and Timothy was thankful to God for giving him such a friend. The courage and fidelity of the young evangelist had been tried in times of difficulty, and of this the apostle and the Philippians had had many proofs. The Church was therefore ready to welcome him with confidence and respect. The minister should be faithful to the gospel at all times. Oliver Millard, an earnest and popular preacher of the reign of Louis XI., attacked the vices of the court in his sermons, and did not spare the king himself, who, taking offence, sent the priest word that if he did not change his tone he would have him thrown into the Seine. "The king," replied Oliver, "is the master to do what he pleases; but tell him that I shall reach paradise by water sooner than he will by post-horses." This bold answer at once amused and intimidated the king, for he let the preacher continue to preach as he pleased and what he pleased.

III. **To be followed by a hoped-for personal visit.**—"Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly" (vers. 23, 24). Until his own fate is determined, the apostle seems desirous to keep Timothy with him; but as soon as he learned the issue, he would despatch his trusty messenger to Philippi, and cherished the hope of coming himself. Whatever the result may be, martyrdom or liberty, the apostle calmly and firmly trusts in the Lord.

Lessons.—1. *The good are ever devising plans for the benefit of others.* 2. *An earnest spirit inspires others to holy toil.* 3. *The best virtues are strengthened by Christian work.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 19-24. *Ministerial Anxiety for the Welfare of the Church.*—1. The crosses and comforts of a Christian, endued with a truly public spirit, depend not so much upon those things which concern himself, as those which are of public concern to Jesus Christ and His Church. 2. A minister imitates the apostles in watching over their flock when the state of souls is the object of his care, and when the care arises, not from constraint, but from love to the party cared for. 3. Our own things and the things of Christ are often in two contrary balances. 4. The calling of the ministry is a service, and ministers are servants of Christ, for the Church, and not lords over their faith.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 21. *The Life of Christ the only True Idea of Self-devotion.*—A refined selfishness is one of the worst antagonists of the Church of Christ.

I. It may consist with all the Church requires as a condition to communion in her fullest privileges.

II. But it extinguishes all that ever produced any great work in Christ's service.

III. The secret of that stupendous self-devotion which saints in all ages have manifested is—they set up the life of Christ before them.

IV. The customs of life and all the current maxims and unwritten laws of society maintain so tyrannous a hold even over good minds that high and generous tempers are chilled into inaction.—*H. E. Manning.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 25—30.

A Devoted Christian Minister—

I. **A valued associate of good men.**—"Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants" (ver. 25). Epaphroditus had been sent by the Philippian Church with a gift to Paul, and, pending the proposed visit of himself or Timothy, he employs him as his messenger. The commendation of Epaphroditus indicates the apostle's high estimate of the character of the man—a Christian brother, a colleague in toil, a fellow-soldier in scenes of danger and conflict. The work of the Christian minister brings him into contact with the noblest spirits of the times.

II. **Full of sympathy for the anxieties of his people.**—"For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick" (ver. 26). It may be that Epaphroditus was the more anxious to return to his people lest the rumour of his sickness should have disastrous consequences on the state of his Church, that some parties between whom he had mediated should take advantage of his prostration and fall again into animosity, or it may be that he might dispel the distress and sorrow of his people on his own account. This longing to see his people reveals a womanly tenderness that some men might call weakness. Paul did not so regard it. He knew the manly robustness of spirit, the decision, energy, and devotedness that had made Epaphroditus his honoured companion in labour and fellow-soldier; and to him the element of softness and sweetness brought out in the languor of the recovery exhibited a new charm. "The best men often show a union of opposite virtues; for example, Epaphroditus. The finest delicacy of soul which, if alone, might seem excessive and effeminate, allies itself to a manly courage, which sets at naught life itself. The deepest love of the Church does not exclude a most faithful attachment to its great apostle, nor anxiety for the present moment forbid sympathy for a distant community. One may reverence and acknowledge superior men, and yet give all the glory to God alone; may be anxious for his own soul, and yet give himself to the welfare of the Church and the common service of its membership" (*Lange*).

III. **Exposed himself to great risk in the eager discharge of duty.**—"For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; . . . I sent him therefore . . . that when ye see him again ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful" (vers. 27, 28). The sickness of Epaphroditus was probably brought on by the risks and exposures of his journey from Philippi to Rome. It was no easy task for a Christian, one of a sect everywhere spoken against, hated and oppressed, having no protection from either Jewish or Roman rule, to undertake such a mission, carrying aid to a man in prison, who was bitterly hated by many, and over whose approaching execution they were gloating with a fiendish satisfaction. But Epaphroditus braved all the privations and sufferings of the perilous enterprise, and would not hesitate to acknowledge publicly before the world that the prisoner he sought to help was his friend. Paul fully understood all the perils of the adventure and that it had nearly cost a valuable life; he thus specially acknowledges the mercy of God both to himself and the Philippians and the mitigation of their mutual sorrow in the recovery of Epaphroditus. "Life, especially the life of a faithful servant of Christ, possesses great value. For such a life we ought to pray; and it is an act of God's grace when it is preserved to the Church" (*Heubner*). "It is a fine thing," wrote Sailer, "if you can say a man lived and never lifted a stone against his neighbour; but it is a finer far if you can say also he took out of the path the stones that would have caught his neighbour's feet. So did Feneberg, and this his doing was his life."

IV. **Highly commended for his character and work's sake.**—"Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me" (vers. 29, 30). Words of highest eulogy, coming from such a source, and uttered under such circumstances. How tender, unreserved and unselfish are the apostle's commendations of Timothy and Epaphroditus, and how large and loving the heart from which they came! Even with these friends, so dear and needful to him, the aged servant of Christ, worn with labour and suffering, is willing, for the work of Christ, to part, and to be left alone. And this man was notorious, a few years before, as Saul the persecutor. What wrought the change? The glorious gospel of the blessed God. The faithful, conscientious, self-denying minister of the word cannot fail to win the esteem and love of his people.

Lessons.—1. *A Christian minister has many opportunities of usefulness.* 2. *Should cultivate a generous and sympathetic nature.* 3. *Should be faithful in all things.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 25-28. *Anxieties of Ministerial Life.*—1. Ministerial employment is a painful, laborious work, and faithful ministers who are standard-bearers or sentinels, and march in the front, before the Lord's people, have a peculiar battle of their own for truth and piety. The Lord sometimes suffers His servants to fall into desperate dangers, that His mercy may be the more seen in their delivery. 3. Courage under sufferings for Christ, and rejoicing in God, may consist with moderate sorrow and heaviness. 4. The weights and griefs of the godly do prove an occasion of rejoicing afterwards, so the grief which the Philippians had because of their pastor's sickness and apprehended death ended in joy when they saw him in health again.—*Fergusson.*

Vers. 29, 30. *Heroic Devotion to Christ*—

I. **Is wholly absorbed in the work of Christ.**

II. **Risks life in serving the cause of God.**

III. **Should be held in highest esteem.**

IV. **Should be joyfully acknowledged in whomsoever manifested.**

CHAPTER III.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Finally.**—Lit. "as to the rest." The apostle had intended to bring his letter to a close, but something of which we have no information leads him to warn his readers against Judaizers and their methods. He resumes his farewell at iv. 8, yet lingers there. **To write the same things.**—Whatever they may have been, they concerned the security of his readers. His hand had so often written up in bold letters the *Cave canem* to warn his unsuspecting children, that we may be allowed to think that is what he means to do again.

Ver. 2. **Beware of dogs.**—Who would "turn again and rend you." If the term is a retort on "Gentile dogs," and looks like "railing for railing," we may explain it by the directness of the metaphor. Dogs and Judaizers have this in common—that they tear flesh. The savage delight of having inflicted a wound is shown in Gal. vi. 13. **Beware of the concision.**—A bitter play on the name by which the Jews thought themselves distinguished (Eph. ii. 11). St. Paul changes the prefix, and stigmatises them as "the mutilation party." Lightfoot gives illustrations of this toying with words, *e.g.*, in the complaint of an ambassador that he had been sent, not to Spain, but to Pain.

Ver. 3. **For we are the circumcision.**—How completely Paul had sloughed his Rabbinic literalism this verse clearly shows (Rom. ii. 28, 29). **Which worship God in the Spirit.**—See our Lord's words to the woman of Samaria, prophetic of the day when worship shall be set free from its trammels and cerements (John iv. 23, 24).

Ver. 4. **Though I might also have confidence in the flesh.**—They will never be able to say he "speaks evil of that which he knows not." "If there is any profit in that direction," he might say, "I will set my foot as far as who goes farthest." An *argumentum ad hominem.*

Ver. 5. **Circumcised the eighth day.**—Beginning with this he works his way, through this and the following verses, to the climax of the straitest sect. The items of this verse have to do with the birth and education of the apostle.

Ver. 6. **Concerning zeal.**—"An expression of intense irony, condemning while he seems to exalt his former self" (*Lightfoot*). **Righteousness which is in the law.**—Legal righteousness. Exact attention to all its manifold commands and prohibitions.

Ver. 7. **What things were gain.**—The various points in which I had considered myself fortunate, giving me an advantage over others. **Those I counted loss for Christ.**—The tense of the verb "counted" denotes an action the result of which continues. It leaves no place for after-regrets, like those of the woman who stopped to look back on Sodom. St. Paul counts his Judaism, with its emoluments, well lost. "Having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it" (Matt. xiii. 46).

Ver. 8. **Yea, doubtless, and I count, etc.**—A more explicit statement of the abiding satisfaction with the chosen lot. "I still do count." **All things.**—Whatever they may be—not simply those named above. **For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.**—"The eminent quality of a possession attained is the ground for estimating other possessions according to their relation to that one" (*Meyer*). **For whom I have suffered the loss of all things.**—The words "gain" and "loss" are the same in these verses as in our Lord's memorable saying, "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" (Mark viii. 36). **And do count them but dung.**—So R.V. text, "refuse," margin. If we accept the meaning "that which is thrown to the dogs," we have an apt interpretation, but we need to guard against attributing to the apostle subtleties of expression born in a lexicographer's brain.

Ver 9. **Through the faith of Christ.**—Better without the article as R.V. Faith is the medium by which righteousness comes. **The righteousness which is of God.**—Which originates from God as the fount of all righteousness. **By faith.**—R.V. margin, "upon"; that is, resting upon faith as its condition; above it was the medium.

Ver. 10. **The power of His resurrection.**—The wide-reaching and conquering force and efficacy which render death inert (2 Tim. i. 10) and draw "the sting of death" (1 Cor. xv.). **And the fellowship of His sufferings.**—The apostle has no desire to go by any other way to his glory than that by which his Lord went—*per crucem ad lucem.* **Being made comformable unto His death.**—R.V. "becoming conformed." The original is one word where we have three, "being made conformable," taking that lowly guise which will agree with the bearing of Him who "took the form of a servant." "The agony of Gethsemane, not less than the agony of Calvary, will be reproduced, however faintly, in the faithful servant of Christ." (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 11. **If by any means I might attain.**—How little is there here of the spirit of those who profess themselves "as sure of heaven as though they were there." Meyer thinks the expression excludes moral security, but not the *certitudo salutis* in itself. **Unto the resurrection of the dead.**—By a very slight change "from the dead" instead of "of the dead" the R.V. indicates rather too feebly the only use of the term in the New Testament. "From amongst" would have been more likely to arrest attention. Whilst Meyer says the compound word for resurrection in no way differs from the ordinary one, Lightfoot thinks the form of expression implies and the context requires the meaning "the final resurrection of the righteous to a new and glorified life."

Ver. 12. **Not as though I had already attained.**—The word for "attained" may possibly refer to the turning-point in St. Paul's history, and so the phrase would mean, "not as though by my conversion I did at once attain." This interpretation, which is Bishop Lightfoot's, is challenged by Dr. Beet. It seems preferable, on other than grammatical grounds, because the following phrase, if we refer the former to conversion, is an advance of thought. **Either were already perfect.**—Describing a present state which is the consequence of past processes. He has not reached the condition where nothing else can be added. He is most blessed who, as he mounts ever higher, sees perfection, like Abraham's mount of sacrifice, "afar off."

Ver. 13. **Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended.**—Some think a reference to the opinion of others lies in the words; but St. Paul seems to be denying of himself what others asserted (in various ways) of themselves. **But this one thing I do.**—Lit. "but one thing"; the words "I do" in A.V. and R.V. are a supplement. Meyer thinks it better to supply "think." It does not seem necessary to supply anything. "One thing" the apostle never loses sight of; all the threads of life are gathered up into it. **Forgetting the things that are behind.**—The thought of how much of the course has been covered, and how it was done, sinks in the consideration of what has yet to be achieved. **And reaching forth.**—"Like one of those eager charioteers . . . of the Circus Maximus . . . leaning forward in his flying car, bending over the shaken rein and the goaded steed" (*Farrar*). St. Paul usually employs the figure of the foot-race; and "the not looking back, which showed a right temper in a runner, would be fatal to the charioteer" (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 14. **I press toward the mark.**—"I hasten towards the gaol" where the adjudicators stand. **For the prize of the high calling.**—If the "hollow wraith of dying fame" could lead the athletes to put forth almost superhuman effort, how much more worthy was "the amaranthine crown of glory" (1 Pet. v. 4).

Ver. 15. **As many as be perfect.**—No longer novices, but having been initiated fully into the most secret mysteries of the faith—"that Christian maturity in which one is no longer a babe in Christ." The reproachful irony which some detect hardly comports with the general tone of the letter.

Ver. 16. **Let us walk by the same rule.**—That which had been to them the means of such distinct progress had thus approved itself as the safe and prudent course to follow.

Ver. 17. **Followers together of me.**—He does not, as some ungracious pastors do, show the steep road to perfection whilst himself staying at the wicket-gate. Like the good Shepherd, he leadeth his sheep.

Ver. 18. **For many walk . . . the enemies of the cross of Christ.**—Christians in name only, whose loose interpretations of the perfect law of liberty make it possible to live an animal life. The cross of Christ, symbol of His self-renunciation, should be the place of execution for all fleshly desires of His followers; and, instead of that, these men over whom an apostle laments have made it an opportunity of sensual gratification. They say, "We cannot help Him; He does not need our help; it is of little consequence how we live."

Ver. 19. **Whose end is destruction.**—Beet argues from this that Universalism cannot be true. It must be admitted that St. Paul is speaking of sins of the body, and perhaps is thinking of the ruinous effects of fleshly indulgence. **Whose god is their belly.**—Against the dominion of appetite all the teachers of mankind are at one. All agree in repudiating the doctrine of the savage:

> "I bow to ne'er a god except myself
> And to my Belly, first of deities."
>
> *Seeley.*

"The self-indulgence which wounds the tender conscience and turns liberty into licence is here condemned" (*Lightfoot*). **Whose glory is in their shame.**—Their natures are so utterly perverted that they count that which is their degradation as matter for pride. Like the man whom our Lord describes, such men not only "fear not God, nor regard man," but can lightly vaunt the fact. **Who mind earthly things.**—The peculiar form of expression is noteworthy. At these men, "of the earth, earthy," the apostle stands looking in amazement. His expression reminds us of St. James: "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways" (so the R.V.).

Ver. 20. **For our conversation is in heaven.**—"Our" is emphatic, contrasting with the "earthly things" just named. "Conversation" is that to which we most readily turn, as

the needle trembles to the pole. Our hearts are with our treasure, and that is far away from earthly things. "They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a city;" it is the soul's "*Heimweh*," the yearning for the homeland. We must not understand the words to mean "Our mode of speech is like that in heaven," nor "Our habit of life is heavenly." The word for "conversation" means "the commonwealth," "the general assembly and Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (Heb. xii. 23). **From whence also we look for the Saviour.**—From that heaven, "whither the Forerunner is for us entered," "He shall come in like manner." Meanwhile we stand in readiness to receive Him. The word for "look for" (R.V. "wait for") graphically depicts the attitude of waiting.

Ver. 21. **Who shall change our vile body.**—R.V. much better, "Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation." We are not to consider the body as the cause of sin, as something outside the redemption wrought by Christ, "the Saviour of the body." The fashioning anew will not lose any essential part of the body. As the colours in a kaleidoscope change form at each movement, but are yet always the same, so in the change of the body there will be "transition but no absolute solution of continuity." The body of our humiliation is the frail tenement in which the exile spirit sojourns (2 Cor. v. 1-8); it is the soon-wearied companion of an eager spirit (Matt. xxvi. 41); it "returns to the dust as it was" (Eccles. xii. 7). **That it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.**—R.V. "that it may be conformed to the body of His glory," as contrasted with the body of His humiliation (Phil. ii. 8), the body in which He tabernacled amongst us (John i. 14). **The power whereby He is able to subdue all things.**—He has power, not only to raise and glorify the body, but to subdue and renovate all things.

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

The False and the True in Religion.

I. **The false in religion evident in the character of its advocates.**—"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision" (ver. 2). "Dogs" was an epithet expressive of great contempt, and indicative of impurity and profanity. It was a term applied to the Judaizers, or, as Chrysostom calls them, "base and contemptible Jews, greedy of filthy lucre and fond of power, who, desiring to draw away numbers of believers, preached at the same time both Christianity and Judaism, corrupting the gospel." They were "evil workers" causing much spiritual mischief. They were of "the concision"—mere cutters or slashers of the flesh. "The same men are described in each clause as impure and profane, as working spiritual mischief, and as taken up with a puerile faith in flesh-cutting. In the first clause you have their character, in the second their conduct, and in the third their destructive creed. Men who insisted on circumcision as essential to salvation made the rite ridiculous—Judaized ere they Christianised. To circumcise a Gentile was not only to subject him to a rite which God never intended for him, but it was to invest him with a false character. Circumcision to him was a forgery, and he carried a lie in his person. Not a Jew, and yet marked as one, having the token without the lineage, the seal of descent and not a drop of Abraham's blood in his veins. To hinge salvation, especially in the case of a Gentile, on circumcision was such a spurious proselytism, such a total misappreciation of the Jewish covenant, such a miserable subversion of the liberty of the gospel, such a perverse and superstitious reliance on a manual rite, that its advocates might well be caricatured and branded as the concision" (*Eadie*). The false in religion stands exposed and condemned by the character and methods of its propagators.

II. **The true in religion has definite characteristics.**—1. *In the spirituality of its worship.* "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit" (ver. 3). There is a great difference between the derisive use of the term "concision" and the use of the circumcision in this verse. There is a Christian circumcision, which is a "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh"; and this is not a manual but a spiritual act. All that the old circumcision typified the Christian enjoys. "The spiritual offspring of Abraham have nobler gifts by far than his natural seed—blessing not wrapped up in civil franchise, or dependent

upon time, or restricted to territory." The Christian has learnt that true religion consists, not in forms and ceremonies and temporal privileges, but in a right state of heart towards God, in a loftier worship, and a more intense spiritual life.

2. *In making Christ the basis of confident exultation.*—"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord . . . rejoice in Christ Jesus" (vers. 1, 3). Christ, and Christ only, is the Christian's plea, and the joyous theme of his unending song: Christ, the divine, all-glorious Son of God. Theodosius, in the fourth century, at one time so far favoured the Arians as to let them open their places of worship and labour to undermine the divinity of Christ. Soon after this he made his son Arcadius, a youth of sixteen, an equal partner with him in his throne; and the noblemen and bishops were invited to come on an appointed day to congratulate him. Among the number was Amphilocus, a famous old bishop who had bitterly suffered in the Arian persecution. He made a very handsome address to the emperor, and was about to take his leave, when Theodosius exclaimed: "What, do you take no notice of my son? Do you not know that I have made him partner with me in the empire?" Upon this the good old bishop went up to young Arcadius, and, putting his hand upon his head, said, "The Lord bless thee, my son." The emperor, roused into rage by this apparent neglect, exclaimed: "What, is this all the respect you pay to a prince that I have made of equal dignity with myself?" Upon this the bishop, with the grandeur of an angel and the zeal of an apostle, looking the emperor full in the face, indignantly said: "Sire, do you so highly resent my apparent neglect of your son because I do not give him equal honours with yourself! And what must the eternal God think of you who have given leave to have His co-equal and co-eternal Son degraded in His proper divinity in every part of your empire?"

3. *In distrusting the supposed virtue of outward rites.*—"And have no confidence in the flesh" (ver. 3). No confidence in the supposed good conferred by externals. Birth and lineage, family, tribe, and nationality on the one hand, and the moral character determined by them on the other, Paul reckons together as excellencies and gifts of the same kind, and holds them in slight esteem compared with what he has in Christ. The morality of men belongs to the province of the natural life; it depends on birth, family, position, culture, time, and circumstances, and gives reason, as does every favour, for humble thankfulness, but not for proud boasting. Such, as contrasted with the concision, is the circumcision; the children of believing Abraham and blessed with him; serving God by His Spirit in a higher and more elastic worship; glorying in Him who has won such privileges and blessings for them, and having no trust in any externals or formalities on which the Judaizer laid such stress as securing salvation or as bringing it within an available reach (*Lange, Eadie*).

III. **Against the false in religion it is necessary to faithfully warn.**—"Beware . . . beware . . . beware!" (ver. 2). Like three peals of a trumpet giving a certain blast do the three clauses sound, and the repetition reveals the intense anxiety and earnestness of the alarmed apostle. It is the duty of the minister to warn his people of whatever endangers their spiritual life and eternal welfare. News came to a certain town, once and again, that the enemy was approaching; but he did not then approach. Hereupon in anger the inhabitants enacted a law that no man on pain of death should bring again such rumours as the news of an enemy. Not long after the enemy came indeed, and besieged, assaulted, and sacked the town, of the ruins of which nothing remained but this proverbial epitaph—"Here once stood a town that was destroyed by silence."

Lessons.—1. *Genuine religion is self-evident.* 2. *Falseness in the garb of religion works serious mischief.* 3. *True religion demands constant watchfulness.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. *Safeguards against Error.*—1. To rejoice in Christ—to be constantly and with delight making recourse to Him—is a choice guard against any error contrary to the truths relating to Him. 2. Often repeating and inculcating truths that are most for edification ought neither to be burdensome to a minister nor yet wearied of by the people. 3. Temptations to error are covered over with such pious pretences and lovely baits that there is need of many guards and frequent warnings.—*Fergusson.*

Ver. 2. *Emphatic Warnings against False Teachers*—

I. **Because of their snarling methods and insatiable greed.**—"Beware of dogs."

II. **Because of their wicked and destructive policy.**—"Beware of evil workers."

III. **Because their zeal is wholly misdirected and injurious.**—"Beware of the concision."

Ver. 3. *Spiritual Circumcision*—

I. **Is an inward and conscious spiritual change.**—"For we are the circumcision."

II. **While reverently using outward forms of worship is superior to them.**—"Which worship God in the Spirit."

III. **Finds its joy in living union with Christ.**—"And rejoice in Christ Jesus."

IV. **Repudiates all ordinances that divert from Christ.**—"And have no confidence in the flesh."

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

External Religionism incomparable with the True Knowledge of Christ.

I. **The highest example of external religionism affords no ground for confident boasting** (vers. 4-6).—External religionism had its most complete embodiment in Paul. He was its most zealous devotee, its ablest champion. These verses describe the best eulogy that can be given of the observer of external rites. By birth, lineage, training, ability, consistency of character, and sincerity of aim, Paul was an ideal Jew, a model all his countrymen might aspire to copy. If there was ground for boasting, no one had a greater right than he. He needed no Christ, no Saviour; he was well able to look after himself. But one day the discovery came that all this glorying was vain; instead of gaining salvation he was farther from it than ever, and in danger of losing everything. Religious progress is often more apparent than real. When Captain Parry and his party were in search of the North Pole, after travelling several days with sledges over a vast field of ice, on taking a careful observation of the pole-star, the painful discovery was made that, while they were apparently advancing towards the pole, the ice-field on which they were travelling was drifting to the south, and bringing them nearer to the verge, not of the pole, but of destruction.

II. **The supposed gains of external religionism are for Christ's sake esteemed as loss.**—"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (ver. 7). Not losses, compared with the plural of gains; but all the supposed gains are treated as one great loss, and this after the most careful scrutiny and calculation. "I counted loss." The swelling sum of fancied virtues, painfully gathered and fondly and proudly contemplated, vanishes into nothing at one stroke of the discriminating pen. All that was prized as valuable, and as the all of personal possession, is regarded as dross, because of Christ. They did not help him to win Christ, but to lose Him; the more he gained in self-righteousness the more he lost of Christ. It was not only profitless, but productive of positive loss.

III. **The surpassing excellency of the knowledge of Christ renders external religionism utterly worthless.**—"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; . . . and do count them but dung [refuse], that I may win Christ" (ver. 8). The gains were: circumcision performed without any deviation from legal time or method; membership in the house of Israel, and connection with one of its most honoured tribes; descent from a long line of pure-blood ancestry; adherence to a sect whose prominent distinction was the observance of the old statutes; earnest and uncompromising hostility to a community accused of undermining the authority of the Mosaic code, and a merit based on blameless obedience to the law. These once gloried and confided in were counted as a loss, for the sake of a superior gain in the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. He was no loser by the loss he had willingly made, for the object of knowledge was the divine Saviour. Is it not super-eminent knowledge to know Him as the Christ; to know Him as Jesus, not because He wears our nature, but because we feel His human heart throbbing in unison with ours under trial and sorrow; to know Him as Lord, not simply because He wears a crown and wields a sceptre, but because we bow to His loving rule and gather the spoils of the victory which He has won and secured? The apostle made a just calculation, for neither ritualism, nor Israelitism, nor Pharisaism, nor zealotism, nor legalism could bring him those blessings with which the knowledge of Christ was connected; nay, until they were held as loss this gain of gains could not be acquired (*Eadie*). As with the two scales of a balance, writes Rieger, when one rises the other falls, and what I add to one diminishes the relative weight of the other; so as one adds to himself he takes away from the pre-eminence which the knowledge of Christ should have. What he concedes to Christ makes him willing to abase himself, to resign all confidence in His own works. Therefore the sharp expressions, "to count as loss, as dung," become in experience not too severe; for to reject the grace of Christ, to regard the great plan of God in sending His Son as fruitless, were indeed far more terrible.

Lessons.—1. *The highest kind and supreme end of all knowledge is the knowledge of Christ.* 2. *True religion is the spiritual knowledge of Christ.* 3. *Religion without Christ is an empty form.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 4-7. *Formalism tested and found wanting*

I. **The best that formalism can do for man, in religious lineage, reputation, zeal, and strictest outward observances, has been experimentally exemplified** (vers. 5, 6).

II. **The most distinguished champion of formalism has confessed its utter inadequacy to satisfy the soul** (ver. 4).

III. **The highest advantages of formalism are worthless compared with Christ** (ver. 7).

Ver. 8. *The Excellent Knowledge of Christ—*

I. **Is extensive.**—Apprehends Him in all those notions and respects wherein the gospel principally discovers Him.

II. **Appropriating.**—Christ Jesus *my* Lord.

III. **Effectual.**—Has a powerful efficacy both upon heart and life, both upon judgment, affection, and practice.

IV. **Fiducial.**—It brings the soul to rest upon Christ and His righteousness alone for pardon, acceptance, salvation.

V. **Useful.**—He that has it studies to improve Christ, to make use of Him for those blessed and glorious purposes for which he knows Christ is given.

VI. **Christ Himself is most excellent.**—1. There is nothing in Him but what is excellent. 2. All excellencies in the creatures are eminently to be

found in Christ. 3. All these excellencies are in Him in a more excellent manner; perfectly, without any shadow of imperfection; infinitely, without any bounds or limits; eternally and unchangeably, they ebb not, they wane not, they are always there in the full, they alter not, they decay not. 4. Not only all that are in the creatures, but innumerable more excellencies than are in all the creatures together, are in Christ alone.

VI. **Those that have attained the excellent knowledge of Christ will not think much to lose all things to gain Christ.**—1. All outward enjoyments and earthly possessions. 2. Personal righteousness as a means of justification.—*David Clarkson.*

The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ.

I. **To know Christ in the divinity of His person is excellent knowledge.**

II. **To know Christ in the glory of His redemption is excellent knowledge.**

III. **The comparative worthlessness of all else.**—1. *Wealth.* 2. *Worldly honour.* 3. *Human learning.* 4. *Mere morality.*

The Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ.

I. **Its pre-eminent excellence is to be found in its certainty.**—Proved by—1. *Prophecy.* 2. *Miracles.* 3. *Experience.*

II. **In its majesty and grandeur.**

III. **In its suitableness and adaptation.**

IV. **In its comprehensiveness.**

V. **The knowledge of Christ is sanctifying.**—*R. Watson.*

Christ the Only Gain.

I. **To count Him gain.**

II. **To covet and seek Him as gain.**

III. **To appropriate Him as gain.**

IV. **To enjoy Him as gain.**—*R. S. Candlish.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9—11.

Features of the Believer's Life in Christ.

I. **The believer's life has its home and stronghold in Christ.**—"And be found in Him" (ver. 9). Once lost, now found: found by Christ; found in Him by others. Once homeless, now safely sheltered. One day Charles Wesley was sitting by an open window looking over the bright and beautiful fields in summertime. Presently a little bird, flitting about in the sunshine, attracted his attention. Just then a hawk came swooping down towards the little bird. The frightened thing was darting here and there, trying to find some place of refuge. In the bright sunny air, in the leafy trees or green fields, there was no hiding-place from the fierce grasp of the hawk. But seeing the open window and a man sitting by it, the bird, in its extreme terror, flew towards it, and with a beating heart and quivering wing found refuge in Wesley's bosom. He sheltered it from the threatening danger, and saved it from a cruel death. Wesley was at that time suffering from severe trials, and was feeling the need of a refuge as much as the trembling bird that nestled safely in his bosom. So he took up his pen and wrote the well-known hymn—

"Jesu, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly."

To be found in Christ means more than mere shelter, more than external fellowship. It means a union as close and vital and abiding as between the members of the body and the head; a union effected by the Spirit, and being the very Spirit of Christ dwelling in us.

II. **The believer's life consists of righteousness, not self-acquired, but divinely inspired through faith.**—"Not having mine own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ" (ver. 9). The apostle now touches upon a theme—justification by faith—which he has argued out with a clearness

and fulness unequalled by any other New Testament writer. The righteousness which was his own was out of the law, or originated by the law, and was acquired by his own effort; but the righteousness which he finds in Christ is not his own, but God's, and is acquired, not by his own merits or efforts, but by faith in Christ. "This righteousness, divine in its origin, awful in its medium, and fraught with such results, was the essential element of Paul's religion, and the distinctive tenet of his theology." When a friend happening to say to the Rev. John Brown, of Haddington, "I suppose you make not your labours for the good of the Church the ground of your comfort," he, with uncommon earnestness, replied, "No, no, no! it is the finished righteousness of Christ which is the only foundation of my hope; I have no more dependence on my labours than on my sins. I rather reckon it a wonder of mercy that God took any of my labours of my hand. Righteousness belongeth unto Him, but unto me shame and confusion of face."

III. **The believer's life is the creation of divine power.**—*It is a life communicated by the exercise of the divine power that raised Christ from the dead.* "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection" (ver. 10). The power exerted by Christ's resurrection is exerted in raising the divine life in the believing soul, and raising it to still higher developments of power and enjoyment. The aspirations of the soul after Christ are aspirations to know more and more the power of His resurrection.

2. *It is a life that will be consummated by the ultimate resurrection of the body.*—"If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (ver. 11). Towards this consummation the apostle yearns with intense desire. All his hopes, all his soul longed for, seem gathered up in this: perfect freedom for ever from sin and sorrow; knowledge of Christ up to the fullest measure of his capacity of knowledge; perfect experimental acquaintance with the power of His resurrection, through perfect fellowship of life with Him; the ineffable and everlasting blessedness of being with Him and like Him; to rise out of the ashes of the tomb and assume the glorious body of the resurrection. We can never forget a corridor in the Vatican Museum, exhibiting on the one side epitaphs and emblems of departed heathens and their gods, and on the other side mementoes of departed Christians. Face to face they stand, engaged, as it were, in conflict, the two armies clinging to their respective standards; hope against despair—death swallowed up in victory. Opposite to lions seizing on horses, emblems of destruction, are charming sculptures of the good Shepherd bearing home the lost lamb—a sign of salvation.

IV. **The believer's life is in sympathetic fellowship with the suffering Christ** —"And to know the fellowship of His sufferings" (ver. 10). The sufferings of Christ are not ended—they are prolonged in the sufferings of His people—and of these the apostle desired to know the fellowship. He longed so to suffer, for such fellowship gave him assimilation to his Lord, as he drank of His cup and was baptised with His baptism. It brought him into communion with Christ, purer, closer, and tenderer than simple service for Him could have achieved. It gave him such solace as Christ Himself enjoyed. To suffer together creates a dearer fellow-feeling than to labour together. Christ indeed cannot be known unless there be this fellowship in His sufferings (*Eadie*). An intimate friend of Handel's called upon him just as he was in the middle of setting the words to music, "He was despised," and found the great composer sobbing with tears, so greatly had this passage and the rest of his morning's work affected the master.

Lessons.—1. *The soul finds its highest life in Christ.* 2. *Life in Christ is secured by the co-operation of man's faith with Divine power.* 3. *To live in Christ is to share the fruits of His mysterious passion.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 10. *Knowledge of the Power of Christ's Resurrection.*

I. **To know Christ includes a clearly defined conception and familiar acquaintance with the special characteristics and unrivalled excellencies of His person.**

II. **To know the power of His resurrection.**—1. *As it is a public and universal vindication of the proper dignity of His person.* 2. *As it seals the doom of human sin.* 3. *As it ensures the destruction of pain and death, and provides for the perpetuation of the believer in a state of immortal felicity.*

The Power of Christ's Resurrection—

I. **As a miracle attesting His divine mission.**

II. **As an evidence of His divinity.**—Resurrection does not always prove divinity, but in these circumstances (Rom. i. 3, 4).

III. **As an indication of the acceptance of His sacrifice.**

IV. **As an incentive to the pursuit of holiness.**—Risen with Christ; risen in Him, sharing His life.

V. **As an instrument of social amelioration.**—The gospel has civilised where it has not Christianised, has repressed and refined where it has not renewed or regenerated.

VI. **As a pledge and preassurance of the glorious resurrection of His people.**—*G. Brooks.*

The Fellowship of Christ's Sufferings.

I. **We have fellowship with Christ in His sufferings in the pain caused by coming in contact with sin.**

II. **In having our motives misinterpreted and our conduct misjudged.**

III. **In the purifying influence of suffering.**

Ver. 11. *The Resurrection of the Dead as an Object to aim at.*

I. **The object which Paul contemplated.**—1. *The resurrection as the proof of final escape from all evil.* 2. *The resurrection as the occasion of public recognition by the Saviour-Judge.* 3. *The resurrection as the pledge of eternal happiness in heaven.*

II. **His desire for that object.**—It *supplies*—1. *A high appreciation of its value.* 2. *A deep sense of its difficulty.* 3. *A persuasion that it may be attained in various degrees.* 4. *A submission to all the divine arrangements in reference to it.*—*G. Brooks.*

The Resurrection of the Just.

I. **What is that entire satisfaction and climax for which we are to long and labour?**

II. **What are the scriptural representations of its accompaniments and consequences?**—1. *The power of recognising all those whom they have known in holy fellowship on earth.* 2. *The resemblance of our nature to Christ.* 3. *High honour is destined for Christians.*

III. **What are the determinations by which it is to be won?**—1. *The relation which the present happy spiritualism of deceased saints bears to the resurrection.* 2. *The representation of the intermediate state.* It is a relic and disadvantageous condition of death, though of death as far as possible mitigated. It shall be overthrown, not only as a state, but as a separate power, in the destruction of death.—*R. W. Hamilton.*

The Attainment of the Resurrection.

I. **Paul's aim.**—"The resurrection of the dead." 1. *The risen Christ is the pledge of a risen life for man.* 2. *The rising of Christ is a power to elevate life.* 3. *Hence arises the gradual attainment of the resurrection.*

II. **Paul's endeavour.**—"If by any means." The necessity for this agonising endeavour arises from—1. *The difficulty of accomplishing it.* 2. *The glory of its attainment.*—*E. L. Hull.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 12—16.

The Highest Type of Christian Experience.

I. **The highest type of Christian experience is divinely outlined in Christ.**—"That for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (ver. 12). "The prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (ver. 14). The prize is not definitely described, but God through the gospel calls upon the soul to take hold of some great, dimly portrayed good, some rich spiritual blessing, some fulness and splendour of character to be secured by a fuller knowledge of Christ. If we say the prize is heaven or the kingdom of God, what is the heavenly kingdom but the fulness of Christ? Though not explained in detail, the prize is sufficiently outlined in Christ, by the master-hand of the divine Artist, as to make it an object of intense longing and strenuous effort to possess. The soul yearns to attain a moral and spiritual perfection found only in Christ, and which the unending development of the beauties of His character are constantly disclosing in ever-growing splendour, and which closer union with Him alone can seize and appropriate.

II. **The effort to attain the highest type of Christian experience is stimulated by conscious defect.**—"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend" (ver. 12). The more clearly the apostle saw his privilege in Christ, the more conscious was he of his shortcomings. There is no progress possible to the man who does not see and mourn over his defects. "The soul of all improvement is the improvement of the soul;" and it is only a keen sense of need that stimulates the soul to continuous and repeated efforts. The ideal is ever ahead of the actual, revealing its defects and exciting to fresh and more earnest endeavours.

III. **The highest type of Christian experience is attained only by strenuous and continuous effort.**—"But this one thing I do, . . . I press toward the mark" (vers. 13, 14). The racer, fixing his eye upon the goal, leans forward, and turning his back upon things behind, presses with all speed towards the prize he covets. If he turns aside, he misses the mark and loses the garland. The great prizes of life are gained only by persevering labour. However prodigious may be the gifts of genius they can only be developed and brought to perfection by toil and study. Think of Michael Angelo working for a week without taking off his clothes, of Handel hollowing every key of his harpsichord like a spoon by incessant practice, and of the sculptor polishing his statue with unwearied repetitions because he said "the image in my head is not yet in my hands." The prize of the Christian race—the crown of eternal life and blessedness—is worthy of the most laborious and self-denying efforts. When at times the heart grows weary in the struggle, a glimpse of the diadem of beauty obtained by faith revives the flagging energies.

IV. **Those who do not see the obligation of striving after the highest type of Christian experience shall be aided with divine light.**—"If in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you" (ver. 15). The difference of view was not some wilful and wicked conception, or some wretched prejudice adhered to with inveterate or malignant obstinacy. It was rather some truth not fully seen in all its bearings, some principle not so perceived as to be carried out in all its details and consequences, some department of duty which they might apprehend rather than appreciate, or some state of mind which they might admire in the apostle, but did not really covet for themselves. The apostle throws his own teaching into the shade, and ascribes the coming enlightenment to God (*Eadie*). The man who is honestly in pursuit of the highest good, though led away for a time by erroneous views, shall not lack the light he sincerely seeks. The light which will help him most must be light from God.

V. **All progress towards the highest Christian experience must be on the lines of real progress already made.**—"Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing" (ver. 16). Every victory over self and sin is a stepping-stone to further triumphs. The struggle of to-day will be the victory of to-morrow. Our most helpful lessons are gathered from our failures. Our present blessings were obtained through faith and labour; our next must be gained in the same way. God will give more light to the man who rightfully uses what he has. "When the morning bursts suddenly on one awakened out of sleep, it dazzles and pains him; but to him who, on his journey, has blessed the dawn and walked by its glimmer, the solar radiance brings with it a gradual and cheering influence."

Lessons.—1. *Christ is the sum and pattern of the highest good.* 2. *Progress in religious experience is a growing likeness to Christ.* 3. *The soul retains its highest enjoyment and power only in Christ.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 12. *The Happy Day and its Sequel.*

I. **St. Paul did not forget the circumstances of his arrest by Jesus.**

II. **St. Paul's remembrance of his arrest led to a practical inquiry as to its purpose.**

III. **The purpose of his arrest by Christ Jesus is before and not behind him, even in his old age.**

IV. **What is the mark to which he presses onward?**—1. *A perfect likeness to Christ.* 2. *A perfect service.* 3. *The reward in heaven.*—*W. Hawkins.*

Vers. 13, 14. *Pressing toward the Mark.*

I. **The apostle's sense of his own shortcomings.**—1. *It argued a high estimate of a Christian's duty.* Perfection is his aim, although not his attainment.

2. *It argued a humble estimate of himself.*—Though the most eminent Christian on earth, he was fully conscious of his own imperfection.

II. **The apostle's method of Christian progress.**—1. *The concentration of his energies.* Many things he did, and he did them wholly. But he made them all subservient to his one idea, which thus unified them all. Decision of character.

2. *Oblivion of the past.*—A wonderful past was his, but he forgot it, except as it might supply a stimulus to his further advances—past times, past pleasures, past sins, past labours, past attainments. The past must have dwelt in his memory, but it did not satisfy him. "Onward" was his motto, and every day he began his race afresh.

3. *Untiring activity.*—He had the goal ever in his eye; he often measured the distance between him and the goal; he stretched every nerve to reach the goal. (1) Do we resemble Paul in his aim? (2) Do we resemble Paul in his efforts.—*G. Brooks.*

Aim High—

I. **In pursuit of moral excellence.**

II. **Intellectual character.**

III. **Active usefulness.**

Lessons.—1. *God Himself has commanded it.* 2. *Society expects it of you.* 3. *The age in which you live demands it.*—*E. D. Griffin.*

Vers. 15, 16. *The Temper to be cultivated by Christians of Different Denominations toward each other.*

I. **Those who adhere to this rule.**—1. *Seek and cultivate their society.* 2. *Use means to promote the mutual improvement of these persons and of ourselves.* 3. *Do all we can to render our mutual reciprocal union more perfect and our usefulness more extensive.*

II. **Those who differ from us in matters of great importance.**—1. *Give consideration to the way in which their*

religious characters have been formed. 2. Pay regard to the difficulties and misapprehensions which lie in the use of words. 3. Reflect what would probably have been the effects upon our minds had we been placed in their circumstances. 4. Act towards them with justice and kindness.

III. **Those who differ from us in matters of smaller moment.**—1. *Show them sincere and honest respect and kindness. 2. Cultivate friendly intercourse with them as far as they are disposed to reciprocate such intercourse. 3. Show that we esteem the essential principle of the gospel more than controversial preciseness and ecclesiastical form.—J. P. Smith.*

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

Good and Bad Examples.

I. **A good example should be attentively studied.**—"Mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample" (ver. 17). We cannot imitate what we do not see and know. It will help us to be good if we carefully watch and meditate on the conduct of the truly good. The best example of uprightness and consistency is worthy of the most painstaking study. "Wherever they found the life of the apostle imitated and displayed the Philippians were to mark it and make it their pattern. Any excellence which they thus discovered they might by God's grace attain to. It was not some distant spectacle they were to gaze at and admire, but an embodiment of earnest faith, walking on the same platform with them, and speaking, acting, praying, suffering, and weeping among them. What had been possible to others was surely not impossible to them" (*Eadie*). A Polish prince was accustomed to carry the picture of his father always in his bosom, and on particular occasions used to take it out and view it, saying, "Let me do nothing unbecoming so excellent a father."

II. **A good example should be faithfully imitated.**—"Brethren, be followers together of me" (ver. 17). Paul had studied profoundly the character of Christ, and was earnestly striving to follow Him. He therefore exhorts the Philippians to imitate him as he sought to imitate Christ; or rather, as Bengel puts it, he invites them to be "fellow-imitators of Christ." To imitate Christ is not copying Him in every particular. We cannot follow Him as Saviour, Mediator, Redeemer. What is meant is, that we are to do our work in the Spirit of Christ, as He would do it. He who follows Christ never misses the right way, and is always led on to victory. When in the Mexican war the troops were wavering, a general rose in his stirrups and dashed into the enemies' lines, shouting, "Men, follow me!" They, inspired by his courageous example, dashed on after him and gained the victory. What men want to rally them for God is an example to lead them.

III. **A bad example is in antagonism to the highest truth.**—"Many walk, of whom I have told you, . . . they are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (ver. 18). Professed friends, dubious in their attachment and promises, are enemies of Christ, and of the great movement in human redemption represented by His cross. While professing to maintain the doctrines of the cross, by their wicked lives they are depreciating them.

1. *A bad example is set by those who concentrate their chief thought on the material.*—"Who mind earthly things" (ver. 19). The world has many attractions, but it has also many dangers. To be wholly absorbed in its pursuits weans the soul from God and holiness and heaven. Gosse tells us, in his *Romance of Natural History*, of certain animals which inhabit the coral reefs. So long as they keep the passage to the surface clear they are safe; but, this neglected, the animal finds the coral has grown around it and enclosed it in a living tomb. And so it is with the life of the soul on earth. The world is

around us everywhere; the danger is when we allow it to grow between our souls and God.

2. *A bad example is set by those who are supremely controlled by their sensual appetites.*—"Whose God is their belly" (ver. 19). The desires of the flesh invite to self-indulgence—to gluttony, revelling, drunkenness; to gaudiness, extravagance, and immodesty of dress; to impurity of speech and conduct. A sensual man looks as if lust had drawn her foul fingers over his features and wiped out the man. The philosopher Antisthenes, who had a contempt for all sensual enjoyment, used to say, "I would rather be mad than sensual."

3. *A bad example is set by those who gloat in their degradation.*—"Whose glory is in their shame" (ver. 19). Man has reached the lowest depth of vice when he boasts in what is really his shame. The last rag of modesty is thrown aside. "These enemies of the cross were not hypocrites, but open and avowed sensualists, conscious of no inconsistency, but rather justifying their vices, and thus perverting the gospel formally for such detestable conduct."

4. *The end of a bad example is ruin.*—"Whose end is destruction" (ver. 19). Evil is the broad way that leadeth to destruction. Sin must be inevitably punished; it works its own fate—"sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." Judge Buller, speaking to a young gentleman of sixteen, cautioned him against being led astray by the example or persuasion of others, and said, "If I had listened to the advice of some of those who called themselves my friends, when I was young, instead of being a judge of the King's Bench, I should have died long ago a prisoner in the King's prison."

IV. **Professed members of the Church who set a bad example are the occasion of constant solicitude and sorrow to the truly good.**—"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping" (ver. 18). Even when denouncing the worst sins, the apostle does it, not with harshness and imperious superiority, but with the greatest tenderness and grief. The anxious minister may well weep over the folly and delusion of half-hearted adherents, over their false and distorted conceptions of the gospel, over the reproach brought against the truth by their inconsistent and licentious lives, and over their lamentable end. The conduct of sinners is more a matter of heart-breaking sorrow than of wrathful indignation.

Lessons.—1. *Example is more potent than precept.* 2. *A bad example should be carefully shunned.* 3. *A good example should be diligently imitated.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 17. *Imitation of the Good—*

I. **Possible only where there is a sympathetic resemblance to and admiration of the character sought to be copied.**—"Brethren."

II. **Is easier when joined with those who have similar aims.**—"Be followers together of me."

III. **Is aided by careful observation and study.**—"Mark them."

IV. **Every good man is an example for others to imitate.**—"So as ye have us for an ensample."

Vers. 18, 19. *Enemies of the Cross—*

I. **Deny the efficacy and purpose of Christ's sufferings.**

II. **Are incompetent to appreciate the spiritual significance of the cross.**—"Who mind earthly things."

III. **Are the victims of sensuality.**—"Whose god is their belly."

IV. **Are degraded beyond all bounds of modesty.**—"Whose glory is in their shame."

V. **Will be inevitably punished.**—"Whose end is destruction."

VI. **Are the cause of much grief to those who must constantly expose them.**—"Of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping."

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

Christian Citizenship—

I. **Has its centre of life and privileges in heaven.**—"For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven" (ver. 20). To show the contrast between the earthly things which absorb the thought of the worldly, and the things of heaven, the apostle proceeds to indicate that the life of the believer, even on earth, is associated with the privileges and blessings of the heavenly commonwealth, of which he is a member. In this world the Christian is but a stranger—living in temporary exile. His city, his home, is in heaven. Longing to enter into possession of all the privileges of the heavenly franchise, earthly things have no attraction for him, and he seeks to act in harmony with his high destiny

II. **Is assured of the deliverance of its members from the perils and hardships of earth.**—"From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 20). The apostle characterises Jesus as Saviour, or as expected in the character of Saviour, and thus suggests an awful contrast, in point of destiny, between himself and those like-minded with him, and the party reprobated by him in the two preceding verses. Their end is destruction, but ours is salvation; to the one He descends as Judge, but to us as Saviour. If there be such visible difference in present character, there is a more awful contrast in ultimate destiny—the two poles of humanity—everlasting punishment; eternal life (*Eadie*). The great Deliverer will emancipate us from the thraldom, suffering, and sorrow of the present world, and complete in its fulness the salvation which is now in process.

III. **Has the confident hope of future dignity and blessedness.**—1. *The body of humiliation shall be transformed into the likeness of Christ's glorified body.* "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (ver. 21). The body of our humiliation connects us with the soil, out of which it was formed, and by the products of which it is supported, on which it walks, and into which it falls at death. It keeps us in constant physical connection with earth, whatever be the progress of the spirit towards its high destiny—its commonwealth in heaven. It limits intellectual power and development, impedes spiritual growth and enjoyment, and is soon fatigued with the soul's activity. In it are the seeds of disease and pain, from functional disorder and organic malady. It is an animal nature which, in spite of a careful and vigilant government, is prone to rebellious outbreaks. But this body is reserved to a high destiny: it shall be like Christ's heavenly body. The brightness of heaven does not oppress Him, neither shall it dazzle us. Our humanity dies indeed, and is decomposed; but when He appears, it shall be raised and beautified. These bodies shall cease to be animal without ceasing to be human bodies, and they shall become spiritual bodies—etherealised vehicles for the pure spirit that shall be lodged within them (*Eadie, passim*).

2. *This transformation shall be effected by the divine power that controls the universe.*—"According to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (ver. 21). While omniscience is the actual possession or exercise of all knowledge, omnipotence is universal ability, which may or may not yet have put forth all its energies, for what is possible to it may not have been effected by it. But Christ shall put forth His power, as we know from other sources, and death itself shall be swallowed up in victory—that which has swallowed up all humanity shall be surrounded by a wider vortex and be itself engulfed. This body of our humiliation has some surviving element, or some indissoluble link, which warrants the notion and shall secure the consciousness of identity, in whatever that identity may consist (*Eadie*). If man's art and device can produce so pure and white a fabric as paper from filthy rags, what

shall hinder God by His mighty power to raise the vile body from the grave and refine and fashion it like unto the glorious body of Christ? "Not a resurrection," says Neander, "as a restoration merely of the same earthly body in the same earthly form; but a glorious transformation, proceeding from the divine, the all-subduing power of Christ; so that believers, free from all the defects of the earthly existence, released from all its barriers, may reflect the full image of the heavenly Christ in their whole glorified personality, in the soul pervaded by the divine life and its now perfectly assimilated glorified organ."

Lessons.—1. *The Christian citizen is but a sojourner on earth.* 2. *His conduct on earth is regulated by a heavenly life.* 3. *He looks for his highest honours and enjoyments in the future.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 20. *Christian Citizenship.*

I. **The heavenly citizenship of Christians.**—1. *The city to which they belong* — heaven. 2. *When are true Christians made citizens of this heavenly state?* When they are pardoned. 3. *What are the privileges connected with this state of relation to the heavenly city?* (1) *Freedom.* (2) *Admits to honourable employment and office.* (3) *Fellowship and communion with the whole body of Israel.* 4. *A right to the common property*—the inheritance of the saints in light.

II. **The conduct manifested by true Christians, and corresponding with their privilege.**—1. *Holiness.* 2. *Boast of the institutions of the heavenly city.* 3. *Are bold and courageous.* 4. *It will be seen in our spirit.* 5. *Our affections are in heaven.*—*R. Watson.*

Ver. 21. *The Resurrection of the Human Body.*

I. **We must be reminded of our sinful condition.**—1. *Our body is called a body of humiliation, because it, as well as the spirit, is the seat of sin.* 2. *If we consider the immense labour necessary to provide for its wants.* 3. *If we consider it as a clog to our devotion.* 4. *It must be still further humbled by death.*

II. **The transformation of this humbled body.**—1. *There can be no deformity.* 2. *The excessive care necessary for the support of the body shall exist no more.* 3. *It shall be an assistant and no longer a hindrance to the operations of the deathless spirit.*

III. **The means by which the transformation will be effected.**—The power of God answers all objections, removes all difficulties.

Lessons.—1. *It becomes us to aspire to as much of the glory of the future state as can be attained.* 2. *This subject affords encouragement to us on the loss of our friends.* 3. *Ought to fortify our minds against the fear of death.*—*Ibid.*

The Glorious Destiny of the Human Body.—If we are in Christ, He will gather up what is left, He will transfigure it with the splendour of a new life, He will change our body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory. Sown in the very extreme of physical weakness, it will be raised in a strictly superhuman power; sown a natural body controlled on every side by physical law, it will be a true body still, but a body that belongs to the sphere of spirit. Most difficult indeed it is even to the imagination to understand how this poor body, our companion for so many years—part of our very selves—is to be first wrenched from us at death and then restored to us if we will, transfigured by the majestic glory of the Son of God. Little can we understand this inaccessibility to disease, the radiant beauty, the superiority to material obstacles in moving through space, the spirituality, in short, which awaits without destroying it.

"Heavy and dull this frame of limbs and heart.
Whether slow creeping on cold earth, or
borne

On lofty steed
Or loftier prow, we dart
O'er wave or field,
Yet breezes laugh to scorn
Our puny speed,
And birds, and clouds in heaven,
And fish like living shafts that pierce the main,
And stars that shoot through freezing air at even.
Who would not follow, might he break his chain?
And thou shalt break it soon.
The grovelling worm
Shall find his wings, and soar as fast and free
As his transfigured Lord, with lightning form
And snowy vest. Such grace He won for thee
When from the grave He sprang at dawn of morn,
And led, through boundless air, thy conquering road,
Leaving a glorious track where saints newborn
Might fearless follow to their blest abode."
—*H. P. Liddon.*

CHAPTER IV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Brethren beloved and longed for, . . . beloved.**—By these caressing titles, which, however, are not words of flattery but of sincere love, he works his way into their hearts. The "beloved" repeated at the close of the verse is like the clinging embrace of affection. **My joy.**—The most delectable joy of St. John was to hear that his children walked in truth. So St. Paul says of his Philippian converts, as he had said of their neighbours of the Thessalonian Church, that they are his joy. **And crown.**—"The word must be carefully distinguished from 'diadem.' It means a chaplet or wreath, and the idea it conveys may be either (1) victory, or (2) merriment, as the wreath was worn equally by the conqueror and by the holiday-maker" (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 3. **And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow.**—It is doubtful whom the apostle addresses. On the whole, however, it seems most probable that Epaphroditus, the bearer of the epistle, is intended (so Lightfoot, following Hofmann). Meyer says: "Laying aside arbitrariness and seeing that the address is surrounded by proper names, we can only find in the word for 'yokefellow' a proper name, . . . genuine Syzygus, *i.e.* thou who art in reality and substantially that which thy name expresses: "*fellow-in-yoke*, fellow-labourer." **Whose names are in the book of life.**—St. Paul had before said the polity of the Christians was a heavenly one. Here he says there is a "burgess list" from which no name of a true citizen is ever by accident omitted—though by any chance he might have omitted to mention his co-workers in his epistle.

Ver. 4. **Rejoice in the Lord.**—R.V. margin, "Farewell." The word is neither "farewell" alone, nor "rejoice" alone (*Lightfoot*). That the A.V. and R.V. texts are justified in so translating seems clear from the "always" which follows.

Ver. 5. **Let your moderation be known.**—This moderation or forbearance is the very opposite of the spirit which will "cavil on the ninth part of a hair" in the way of asserting personal rights.

Ver. 6. **Be careful for nothing.**—R.V. "in nothing be anxious." The word suggests the idea of a poor distraught mind on which concerns have fastened themselves, which drag, one in one direction, another in the opposite. Well says Bengel, "Care and prayer are more opposed than water and fire." In all things, prayer—in nothing, care. **By prayer.**—The general idea of an expression of dependence. **Supplication.**—The specific request—the word hinting too at the attitude of the petitioner, *e.g.* clasping the feet of the person from whom the favour is asked. **With thanksgiving.**—The preservative against any possible defiance which might otherwise find its way into the tone of the prayer, or on the other hand against a despair which creeps over those who think God "bears long" and forgets to answer.

Ver. 7. **And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.**—If we say the peace of God is so profound that the human mind cannot comprehend it, no doubt that is an admissible interpretation of these words; but it seems better far to say, the peace of God excels all that the mere reason of man can do. The νοῦς, the highest faculty of man as such, intended to be the guide of life, oftener brings anxiety than a calm heart. **Shall keep your**

hearts.—As a watchman keeps a city. Lightfoot says we have a verbal paradox, for "to keep" is a warrior's duty; God's peace shall stand sentry, shall keep guard over your hearts. **And minds.**—R.V. much better, "and thoughts," for it is not the mind which thinks, but the products of thinking which the word indicates. The sentry questions all suspicious characters (cf. Prov. iv. 23, and Matt. xv. 19).

Ver. 8. **Whatsoever things are true.**—The apostle recognises the ability of the renewed mind to discern truth under any guise. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One and know all things" (1 John ii. 20). **Honest.**—A.V. margin, "venerable." R.V. text, "honourable." R.V. margin, "reverend." This variety shows the difficulty of finding an exact equivalent for the word of St. Paul, in which the sense of gravity and dignity, and of these as inviting reverence, is combined. **Just.**—Answering to that which is normally right (*Cremer*). **Pure.**—As there is no impurity like fleshly impurity, defiling body and spirit, so the word "pure" expresses freedom from these (*Trench*). It denotes chastity in every part of life (*Calvin*). **Lovely.**—Christian morality as that which is ethically beautiful is pre-eminently worthy to be loved. "Nihil est amabilius virtute," says Cicero. **Of good report.**—R.V. margin, "gracious." Lightfoot says "*fair-speaking*" and so "winning, attractive." Meyer says, "that which, when named, sounds significant of happiness, *e.g.* brave, honest, honourable." **If there be any virtue.**—The New Testament is frugal of the word which is in such constant use in the heathen moralists. If they sought to make man self-confident, it seeks to shatter that confidence. The noblest manliness is godliness. **Think on these things.**—They are things to be reckoned with by every man sooner or later—occupy the thoughts with them now.

Ver. 9. **Those things . . . do.**—Here speaks the same man, with a mind conscious of its own rectitude, who could say, "I have lived in all good conscience before God unto this day." He had not only "allured" his Philippian converts "to brighter worlds," but had "led the way." **The God of peace shall be with you.**—Note the phrase in connection with "the peace of God shall mount guard" (ver. 7).

Ver. 10. **Hath flourished again.**—R.V. "ye have revived your thought for me." The active generosity of the Philippians towards St. Paul had never died, any more than a tree does when it sheds its leaves and stands bare all through the winter. The winter of their disability was past, and the return of the sun of prosperity made the kindly remembrance of the apostle sprout into a generous gift to him.

Ver. 11. **Not that I speak, etc.** "Do not mistake me; I am not moved thus by the good of my own need." The apostle does not leave it possible for one to say with the melancholy Jaques, "When a man thanks me heartily, methinks I have given him a penny and he renders me the beggarly thanks." **I have learned . . . to be content.**—"Self-sufficiency," said Socrates, "is nature's wealth." St. Paul is only self-sufficient so far as Christ dwells in him and assures him, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (cf. Heb. xiii. 5).

Ver. 12. **I know how to be abased.**—To be "in reduced circumstances." **I know how to abound.**—To be in affluence. By this it does not appear that St. Paul meant, "I have chewed the bitter cud of penury, and tasted the sweets of prosperity." Many a man has had to do that—everything lies in how it is done. It is as much beneath the Christian philosopher to make a wry face at the one, as to clap the hands in childish glee at the other. **I am instructed, etc.** Lit. "I have been initiated." The pass-word is in the apostle's possession—no novice is he. **To be full and to be hungry.**—As if we said "to pasture and to pine." It is the psalmist's "green pastures and still waters. . . . The valley of the shadow of death."

Ver. 13. **I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.**—A fresh general statement of the self-sufficiency of ver. 11. "In the grand brevity how marked is the assurance, and at the same time humility" (*Meyer*).

Ver. 15. **No Church communicated with me.**—The lofty independence of the apostle had not unbent to any other Church as to this. There are men from whom one could never receive a gift without sacrifice of self-respect. St. Paul was not the man to be patronised.

Ver. 18. **An odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.**—The last word transfers their deed to another sphere entirely. "Ye did it unto *Me*," says Christ.

Ver. 19. **My God shall supply all your need.**—Did I say, "I am filled"? (ver. 18). I can make you no return, but my God will. He will fulfil every need of yours. **According to His riches in glory.**—According to the abundant power and glorious omnipotence whereby as Lord of heaven and earth He can bestow what He will.

Ver. 22. **The saints . . . of Cæsar's household.**—This expression does not oblige us to think that any relatives of Cæsar had embraced Christianity. It comprises all who in any way were connected with the imperial service.

Ver. 23. **Be with you all.**—The oldest MSS. read, "Be with your spirit."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verse* 1.

A Plea for Steadfastness—

I. **After the pattern of those worthy of imitation.**—"So stand fast in the Lord." Having pointed out the dignity of Christian citizenship and the exalted conduct befitting those possessing its privileges, the apostle exhorts them to steadfastness in imitating those who, through evil and good report and in the midst of opposition and suffering, had bravely maintained their loyalty to Christ. "*So* stand fast"—be sincere and earnest in devotion to God, as they were; be faithful and unflinching, as they were; triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil, as they did. "Behold, we count them worthy who endure;" and the same distinction of character is attainable by every follower of Christ, attainable by patient continuance in well-doing. The ideal of a steadfast character is embodied in the Lord, who was Himself a supreme example of unfaltering obedience and love. Follow Him; being united to Him by faith, deriving continual inspiration and strength from His Spirit, stand fast in Him. Riding up to a regiment that was hard pressed at Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington cried to the men, "Stand fast, Ninety-fifth! What will they say in England?" History records how successfully the appeal was obeyed. Stand fast, Christians! What will they say in the heavenly city to which you belong, and for whose interests you are fighting? William of Orange said he learnt a word while crossing the English Channel which he would never forget. When in a great storm the captain was all night crying out to the man at the helm, "Steady! steady! steady!"

II. **Addressed to those who have given evidence of willingness to be instructed.**—"My joy and crown." The Philippians who had embraced the gospel he preached, and whose lives had been changed by its power, were the joy and crown of the devoted apostle. The crown was not the diadem of royalty, but the garland of victory. He has in his mind the famous athletic games of the Greeks, which in the diligent training and the strenuous effort to gain the laurel coronet, and the intensity of joy felt by the victors, were a significant illustration of the Christian life, whether as regards the spiritual progress of the believer himself, or his work for the salvation of others. He believed the Lord would place around his brow an imperishable garland of honour, of which each soul that had been quickened, comforted, and strengthened by Him would be a spray or leaf. In Nero's prison, aged, worn with trouble, manacled, uncertain of life, he rejoiced in being a successful minister of Christ—a conqueror wreathed with amaranth. The emperor in his palace was in heart weary and wretched; the prisoner was restful and happy, invested with a glory that should shine on undimmed, when the glitter of Nero's power and grandeur should vanish as a dream. The satisfaction enjoyed by those who first led us to Christ and who have helped us in our spiritual struggles, is another reason for continued steadfastness and fidelity.

III. **Urged with affectionate solicitude.**—"My brethren dearly beloved and longed for, . . . my dearly beloved." The terms employed are the outflow of a jubilant spirit, and are full of tender endearment and loving appreciation. Love delights to exaggerate; yet there is no exaggeration here. The Philippians were to the apostle "brethren beloved—dearly beloved"—children of the same spiritual Father, members of the one family of God, united together in a happy Christian brotherhood. He recalls the first introduction of the gospel into Philippi, the preaching of the word, the impressions made, the converts won, the formation of the Church, and its growth and prosperity, amid labours and suffering. Attachments were then formed that deepened and strengthened with the years. Christian friendships call forth the finest feelings of the soul, and

form a strong bond of union in the love of a common Saviour. Christ will have no forced selection of men, no soldiers by compulsion, no timorous slaves, but children, brethren, friends.

Lessons.—1. *Steadfastness is a test of genuine devotedness.* 2. *Instability is a loss of advantages often won at great cost.* 3. *They who endure will finally conquer.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 2, 3.

Glimpses of Life in the Early Church.

I. **The early planting of the gospel involved arduous and united toil.**—"Which laboured with me in the gospel" (ver. 3). Prodigious as were the labours of Paul, he could never have accomplished the work he did but for the willing co-operation of others. There is great art in evoking the sympathy and help of those who can help forward the work of God. Christian work finds scope for all kinds of talents and agencies. Pioneer work is rough work and tests all our powers and resources. The difficulties of the work unite its propagators in heart and hand. There is little good done without strenuous labour, though the results of our toil are not always immediately apparent. Dr. Judson laboured diligently for six years in Burmah before he baptised a convert. At the end of three years he was asked what evidence he had of ultimate success. He replied, "As much as there is a God who will fulfil all His promises." A hundred churches and thousands of converts already answer his faith.

II. **The names of gospel pioneers are not forgotten.**—"With Clement also, and with other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life" (ver. 3). Some of these names are recorded in the pages of history and handed down to our day; the rest, though unknown on earth, are registered in the imperishable pages of "the book of life." Clement, though unknown to fame and unidentified with any other of the same name mentioned in history, is referred to here as recognising the apostle's cordial recollection of his valuable work. But the unknown on earth are not forgotten in heaven. The work we do for God will live for ever. When Columbus was homeward bound after his brilliant discovery of a new world he was overtaken by a terrific storm. In his indescribable agony that not only his life and that of his crew, but his magnificent discovery must all go down and be lost in the abyss, and that, too, not far from land, he committed to the deep hurried entries of that discovery sealed up in bottles, in the hope that some day they might reach land. We need not be unduly anxious about either our work or our fame; God will take care of both.

III. **From the earliest times women have rendered valuable help in the propagation of the gospel.**—"Euodias, Syntyche, . . . women which laboured with me in the gospel" (vers. 2, 3). In the Temple worship the Jewish women were fenced off in a court by themselves. The woman occupied an inferior religious position in Rabbinical teaching. It was a shock to public feeling to see a rabbi talking to a female. Even the disciples were surprised that their Master should be found conversing with a woman on the brink of the Samaritan well. Jesus Christ broke down this middle wall of partition as He had broken down the other. Here, again, He made both one. If in Christ there is no distinction of Jew and Gentile, neither is there of male or female. Women were His faithful and constant attendants; women were the favoured witnesses of His resurrection; women were among the most helpful fellow-workers of the apostles. There was an organised ministry of women deaconesses and widows in the Apostolic Church. "What women those Christians have," exclaimed the heathen rhetorician, on learning about Anthusa, the mother of Chrysostom. Anthusa at the early age of twenty lost her husband, and thenceforward devoted herself wholly to the

education of her son, refusing all offers of further marriage. Her intelligence and piety moulded the boy's character and shaped the destiny of the man, who in his subsequent eminence never forgot what he owed to maternal influence. It is no exaggeration to say that we owe those rich homilies of Chrysostom, of which interpreters of Scripture still make great use, to the mind and heart of Anthusa.

IV. **We learn the apostolic method of reconciling two eminent women in serious disagreement.**—1. *He addresses to each an earnest and pointed exhortation to unity.* "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord" (ver. 2). He repeats the entreaty to show that he placed the like obligation on each of them. He does not exhort the one to be reconciled to the other, for they might have doubted who should take the initiative, and they might wonder, from the position of their names and construction of the sentence, to which of them the apostle attached the more blame. But he exhorts them both, the one and the other, to think the same thing—not only to come to a mutual understanding, but to preserve it. The cause of quarrel might be some unworthy question about priority or privilege, even in the prosecution of the good work—vainglory leading to strife. It does not seem to have been any difference in creed or practice (*Eadie*).

2. *He recognises their devoted and impartial labours.*—"Those women which laboured with me in the gospel" (ver. 3). Their work does not appear to have been done from personal friendship, as is often the case; they treated all and helped all alike. They were deeply interested in the spread of the gospel and the increase of the Church, and toiled with such self-sacrificing devotion as to elicit the special commendation of the apostle.

3. *He entreated that help might be rendered them in the adjustment of their quarrel.*—"And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women" (ver. 3). A third party is appealed to, to interpose his good offices—an evidence that Paul regarded the harmony of these two women a matter of no small importance. Mediation between two persons at variance is delicate and difficult work, but if judiciously done may help to a reconciliation. Women were the first to receive the gospel at Philippi, and from the first used their influence and opportunities in commending it to their sex. The unseemly misunderstanding between these two women whose labours had been so blessed made it the more necessary that something should be done to heal the breach.

Lessons.—1. *Pioneer work has special hardships and temptations.* 2. *The best of women may quarrel.* 3. *It is the wise policy of the Christian statesman to compose and strive to prevent discord and disunion.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 2. *Feminine Disagreement—*

I. **May occasion much mischief in a Church.**

II. **All the more dangerous where the parties are eminent in gifts and labours** (ver. 3).

III. **Reconciled when truly possessing one mind in Christ.**—"Be of the same mind in the Lord."

IV. **The most earnest entreaty should be employed to rectify.**—"I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche."

Ver. 3. *Names in the Book.*

I. **Some observations.**—1. *It is a great thing to have a name in the New Testament.*—Think of the roll-call in Rom. xvi. and Heb. xi.

2. *It is a great thing now to have a name in the family Bible,* for that generally signifies Christian training and parental prayers.

3. *It is a great thing to have a name upon the pages of a church register.*—How affecting are these old manuals,

with their lists of pious men and women, many of whom have passed into the skies.

4. *It is the greatest thing of all to have a name in the Lamb's Book of Life.*—Beyond all fame (Matt. xi. 11). Beyond all power (Luke x. 20).

II. **Some questions.**—1. *In how many books is your name written now?* 2. *How can a human name be written securely in the Lamb's Book of Life?* 3. *To backsliders: are you going to return to your name, or do you want it to come back to you?* 4. *To Christian workers: how many names have you helped to write in the Book of Life?* 5. *Is there any cheer in thinking how our names will sound when the books are opened in the white light of the throne?—Homiletic Monthly.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 4.

Christian Joy—

I. **Is in the Lord.**—"Rejoice in the Lord." The joy of the Christian is not in his own achievements, still less is it in himself or in his own experiences. A glance at ourselves and the imperfections of our work for God fills us with shame and sadness. Pure, lasting joy is found nowhere but "in the Lord." When Möhler, the eminent Roman Catholic symbolist, asserted that "in the neighbourhood of a man who, without any restriction, declared himself sure of his salvation, he should be in a high degree uneasy, and that he could not repel the thought that there was something diabolical beneath this," he only afforded a deep glance into the comfortlessness of a heart which seeks the ultimate ground of its hope in self-righteousness, and in making assurance of salvation to depend on attainment in holiness instead of in simple faith in Christ. The friends of Haller congratulated him on the honour of having received a visit in his last hours from the emperor Joseph II.; but the dying man simply answered, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." The more we realise Christ, not as a dim abstraction or a mere historic personage, but as a living and loving personal reality, the more truly can we rejoice in Him.

II. **Is constant.**—"Always." Christian joy is not a capricious sentiment, a fitful rapture, but a steady, uniform, and continued emotion. The direction of the apostle to rejoice always sounds like a paradox. How can we continually rejoice when we are continually in the midst of sin, suffering, and sorrow? Still, when we think of the change divine grace has wrought in us, when we think of the ample provisions of the gospel every moment available to us, when we contemplate the bright prospects before us which even present distresses cannot dim, and when we remember the infinite ability of our Lord to accomplish all He has promised us, our joy may well be perennial. Airay, the earliest English expositor of this epistle, has well said, "When Satan, that old dragon, casts out many flouds of persecutions against us; when wicked men cruelly, disdainfully, and despitefully speake against us; when lying, slandering, and deceitful mouthes are opened upon us; when we are mocked and jested at and had in derision of all them that are about us; when we are afflicted, tormented, and made the world's wonder; when the sorrowes of death compasse us and the flouds of wickednesse make us afraid, and the paines of hell come even unto our soule; what is it that holds up our heads that we sinke not, how is it that we stand either not shaken, or, if shaken, yet not cast downe? Is it not by our rejoycing which we have in Christ Jesus?"

III. **Is recommended by experience.**—"And again I say rejoice." Paul recommended what he himself enjoyed. If he, in the midst of disappointment, imprisonment, and suffering, would rejoice and did rejoice, so may others. It might be that, as he wrote these words, a temporary depression crept over him, as he thought of himself as a prisoner in the immediate prospect of a cruel death.

It was but a passing feeling. In a moment divine grace triumphed, and with heightened elation and emphasis he repeated, "And again I *will* say, rejoice." We have already remarked that joy is the predominating feature of this epistle, and to the last the apostle maintains the exalted strain.

Lessons.—1. *Great joy is found in working for God.* 2. *Joy is found not so much in the work as in the Lord.* 3. *It is the Christian's privilege to rejoice always.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSE.

Ver. 4. *Rejoicing in the Lord.*

I. **The text involves the fact that believers may and should rejoice.**—1. *The world holds that believers have no enjoyment.* 2. *There are believers who all but teach this*; for (1) they use not the language of joy themselves; (2) they discourage it in others. 3. *But that believers may and should rejoice is evident* for—(1) joy is commanded as a duty; (2) it is mentioned as a fruit of the Holy Ghost; (3) it is a feature of the Christian, portrayed in the Scriptures (Acts ii. 46, 47). 4. *The spiritually-minded, if not warped by some defective system of doctrine, rejoice.* 5. *Joy is quite consistent with those states of mind which are thought to be inconsistent with it.* "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." 6. *Joy is the natural result of peace with God.*

II. **The text exhibits the nature of the joy peculiar to the believer.**—He rejoices "in the Lord." 1. *The world rejoices in the creature and shuts out God.* 2. *The believer rejoices only in God.* 3. *This joy has several elements.* (1) The believer rejoices that God is—"I am." (2) He rejoices that He is what He is. (3) He rejoices in the manifestations of His glory, which He has made in His word, works, and ways. (4) He rejoices in his own relation to Him in Christ—"boasting himself in God." (5) He rejoices in the hope of the glory of God. 4. *Every element of pure and elevated pleasure is found in His joy.* 5. *It is fellowship with God Himself in His joy.*

III. **The text renders it binding upon the believer at all times to seek this privilege and to cherish this feeling**—"always."—This command is reasonable, for: 1. *God is always the same.* 2. *The believer's relation to Him is unalterable.* 3. *The way to God is always open.* 4. *The mind may always keep before it the views which cause joy*—by the indwelling Spirit.

IV. **The manner in which the commandment of the text is pressed teaches us the importance of the duty it inculcates.**—Its importance is manifest, for: 1. *It is the mainspring of worship and obedience.* 2. *It prevents a return to sinful pleasures.* 3. *It renders us superior to temporal suffering*—fits for enduring for Jesus Christ. 4. *It presents to the world* (1) True religion. (2) Connected with enjoyment.

V. **The manner in which the commandment of the text is expressed implies that there are obstacles in the way of obedience.**—What are some of the obstacles? 1. *A habit, natural and strong, of drawing our satisfaction from the creature.* 2. *Not keeping "a conscience void of offence towards God and man."* 3. *Not having the heart in a state to have sympathy with God's character.* 4. *Not proportioning aright the amount of attention given to self and Christ.* 5. *Not making sure of our interest in Christ.*—*Stewart.*

Joy in the Lord—

I. **Is intellectual.**

II. **Moral.**

III. **Spiritual.**

Lessons.—1. *Our power of rejoicing in the Lord is a fair test of our moral and spiritual condition.* 2. *Is a Christian's main support under the trials of life.* 3. *Is one of the great motive forces of the Christian life.*—*H. P. Liddon.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verse 5.

Christian Equity—

I. **Does not exact all the claims of legal justice.**—"Let your moderation [forbearance] be known." Human laws, however carefully devised, may sometimes, if rigidly enforced, act unjustly and cruelly. We should guide ourselves at all times by the broad principles of equity in the sight of God. We should not urge our own rights to the uttermost, but be willing to waive a part, and thus rectify the injustice of justice. "The archetype of this grace is God, who presses not the strictness of His law against us as we deserve, though having exacted the fullest payment for us from our divine Surety" (*Fausset*). It is not gentleness as an innate feeling, but as the result of self-restraint. It does not insist on what is its due, it does not stand on etiquette or right, but it descends and complies. It is opposed to that rigor which never bends nor deviates, and which, as it gives the last farthing, uniformly exacts it. It is not facile pliability—a reed in the breeze—but that generous and indulgent feeling that knows what is its right, but recedes from it; is conscious of what is merited, but does not contend for strict proportion. It is that grace which was defective in one or other, or both, of the women who are charged by the apostle to be of one mind in the Lord. For, slow to take offence, it is swift to forgive it. Let a misunderstanding arise, and no false delicacy will prevent it from taking the first step towards reconciliation or adjustment of opinion (*Eadie*).

II. **Should be evident in dealing with all classes.**—"Be known unto all men." We are to practise forbearance, not only towards our Christian brethren, but towards the world, even towards the enemies of the gospel. It is a rebuke to the Christian spirit to be austere, unbending, and scrupulously exacting. If we are always rejoicing in the Lord, we cannot cherish hard feelings towards any. The Christian should be notorious for gentleness and forbearance; all with whom we come in contact should be made to know it and feel it. We should be prepared for yielding up what may be our own rights, and to endure wrong rather than dishonour Christ, or give a false representation of the heavenly life which He exemplified and recommended, and which is becoming in all his professed followers. "This gentleness manifests itself at one time as equanimity and patience under all circumstances, among all men and in manifold experiences; at another as integrity in business relations; as justice, forbearance, and goodness in exercising power; as impartiality and mercy in judging; as noble yielding, joyful giving, and patient enduring and forgiving" (*Passavant*).

III. **Should be practised as conscious of the near advent of Christ.**—"The Lord is at hand." The early Church had a vivid sense of the immediateness of the second coming of Christ, and were taught to do and bear everything as in His sight. We lose much in spiritual power, and in the realisation of eternal things, when we consign that advent to the remote and indistinct future. After all, the second coming of Christ, and not our own death, is the goal on which our eye should be fixed, as the period which will furnish us with the true and final value of our life-work. In the first ages it would have been deemed a kind of apostasy not to have sighed after the day of the Lord. The coming of the Lord is a motive to show moderation and clemency towards all men, even towards our enemies, for the great Judge is near, who will rectify all inequalities and redress all wrongs.

Lessons.—1. *Equity is superior to legal enactments.* 2. *It is a sorry spectacle when Christians appeal to the civil courts to settle their differences.* 3. *The Christian spirit is the highest equity.*

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

The Cure of Care.

I. **That all anxious care is needless.**—"Be careful for nothing" (ver. 6). It is not forethought that is here condemned, but anxious, distracting care. Care is a kill-joy, and is the great enemy of Christian peace. The future is not ours; why be anxious about it? The past is done with, and regrets about it are unavailing. The future is provided for, for God, the great Provider, is ahead of every step we take towards that future. The ancient custom of distracting a criminal by tying him to the wheels of two chariots which were then driven in opposite directions well illustrates how cares may be allowed to distract the mind. We put ourselves on the rack when we ought to cast our care on God, not in part, nor occasionally, but in all things and at all times. Care depreciates the value of all our past blessings, and dims our vision of the blessings we now actually possess. After the great military victories of Marlborough in 1704, he one day said: "I have for these last ten days been so troubled by the many disappointments I have had, that I think if it were possible to vex me so for a fortnight longer, it would make an end of me. In short, I am weary of my life."

II. **That all anxious care should be taken to God in thankful prayer.**—"But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (ver. 6). The best system of heathen philosophy regarded equability of mind, undisturbed alike by the troubles and allurements of the world, as the most perfect state of the soul; but it did not provide any adequate motive for attaining this desirable equipoise. It could only state the theory and insist on its importance; but refractory human nature had its own way, in spite of philosophy. The apostle supplies in these words a nobler and more workable philosophy. He not only exhorts us to tranquillity of mind, but shows us how it may be attained and kept. In all kinds of anxieties, and especially in the struggles of religious doubt, prayer is the truest philosophy. Our difficulties vanish when we take them to God.

> "By caring and by fretting,
> By agony and fear,
> There is of God no getting;
> But prayer He will hear."

We should cast our care on God because He is our Father. A father's office is to provide for his family. It is out of place for a child to be anxiously making provision for emergencies—asking where to-morrow's food and clothing are to come from, and how the bills are to be paid. We should rebuke such precocity, and send the child to school or to play, and leave all such matters to the ordained caretaker. The birds of the air are taken care of; so shall we be, even though our faith is small. "Our prayers run along one road, and God's answers by another, and by-and-by they meet. God answers all true prayer, either in kind or in kindness" (*Judson*).

III. **That the peace of God in the heart will effectually banish all care.**—"And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (ver. 7). The enemies of peace are: melancholy, to which the apostle opposed joy in the Lord (ver. 4); want of self-restraint or intemperance of feeling or conduct, to which he opposes moderation (ver. 5); care and anxiety, or unthankfulness and unbelief, to which he opposes grateful and earnest prayer (ver. 6); the final result is peace (ver. 7). The peace that God gives "passeth understanding"; it is deep, precious, immeasurable. God alone fully understands the grandeur of His own gift. It is an impenetrable

shield to the believing soul; it guards the fortress in peace though the shafts of care are constantly hurled against it.

Lessons.—1. *Our sins breed our cares.* 2. *God is ever willing to take up the burden of our cares.* 3. *Only as we commit our cares to God have we peace.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 6, 7. *The Remedy for Worldly Care.*

I. **A caution or warning.**—"Be careful for nothing."

1. *This does not respect duty.*—We must have a care for our Lord's interests.

2. *But having performed duty, we are not to be careful as to consequences.*—(1) Because unnecessary. Christ cares. (2) Because useless. It cannot ward off the evil. The evil only in imagination. The evil often a good. Itself the greatest evil.

3. *Because positively sinful.*—(1) It breaks a commandment. (2) It sets aside promises. (3) It undervalues experience. (4) It distrusts God's wisdom and goodness. (5) It is rebellion against God's arrangements. (6) It is an intrusion into God's province.

4. *Because hurtful and injurious.*—(1) It often deters from duty. (2) It destroys the comforts of duty.

II. **Counsel or advice as to the manner in which the evil is to be avoided.**—"But in everything by prayer and supplication." 1. *The correction is not a needless and reckless indifference.* 2. *The emphatic word here is "everything."* This describes the range of prayer. This precept is generally neglected. 3. *The performance of this duty would correct carefulness.* It places everything under God's government, and leaves it there. It leads to a study of the divine will in secular affairs. Our prospects and plans are thus tested. It gives to every event the character of an answer to prayer—evil as well as good. Prayer, *i.e.* direct entreaty or petition. Supplication, *i.e.* deprecation. Thanksgiving for all past and present.

III. **A promise as to the result of following this counsel or advice.**—"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds."

1. *The mind and the heart are the seat of care.*—The mind calculates, imagines. The heart feels fear, grief, despair.

2. *The mind and heart are made the seat of peace.*—"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ." The peace which God has flows from unity, from omnipotence. This is the peace of God, because He gives it.

3. *This peace comes through Jesus Christ.*—He produces the unity. He encircles with omnipotence.—*Stewart.*

Vers. 6, 7. *Anxious Care.*

I. **The evil to be avoided.**—1. *Care is excessive when it is inconsistent with peace and quietness.* 2. *When it induces loss of temper.* 3. *When it makes us distrustful of Providence.* 4. *When it hurries us into any improper course of conduct.* (1) Anxiety is useless. (2) Is positively injurious. (3) Exerts a mischievous influence on others. (4) Is criminal.

II. **The proper course to be pursued.**—1. *Prayer.* 2. *Supplication.* 3. *Thanksgiving.*

III. **The happiness to be enjoyed.**—"The peace of God, which passeth understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."—*Dr. Robt. Newton.*

Ver. 6. *Subjects of Prayer.*

I. **For temporal blessings.**—1. *Our health.* Value of health. Dependence on God. 2. *Our studies.* Not to supersede diligence. Communicates a right impulse. Secures a right direction. 3. *Our undertakings.* Agricultural, commercial.

II. **For spiritual blessings.**—1. *For pardon.* Of our daily sins in thought,

word, and deed. Of all our sins. 2. *For holiness in heart and life.* Regeneration, faith, love, hope, meekness, zeal, resignation, obedience. 3. *For usefulness and happiness.*

III. **For the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.**—1. *On ourselves.* 2. *On our relatives and friends.* 3. *On the Church.* 4. *On the world.*

IV. **For the spread of the gospel.**—1. *For the multiplication of the necessary means.* 2. *For the removal of obstacles.* 3. *For the success of labourers.* 4. *For the conversion of sinners.—G. Brooks.*

True Prayer.

I. **True prayer is specific as well as earnest.**—Nothing is too little to be made the subject of prayer. The very act of confidence is pleasing to God and tranquillising to the suppliant. God is not only willing to hear the details, but He desires that we should tell Him.

II. **True prayer consists of confession, supplication, and thanksgiving.**—We are to confess our sins, ask forgiveness, and do it with gratitude and thankfulness. God will not answer the requests of unthankful beggars. Without thanksgiving what we call prayer is presumption.—*Homiletic Monthly.*

Ver. 7. *The Peace of God keeping the Heart.*

I. **The nature of this defending principle.**—It has as its basis forgiving mercy.

II. **Its author.**—"The peace of God." It is called His peace, because that work of mercy on which it rests is His work, and He Himself communicates the peace.

III. **Its property.**—"Passeth all understanding." 1. *The understanding of such as are strangers to it.* 2. *They who enjoy it the most cannot fully comprehend it.*

IV. **Its effects.**—"Shall keep your hearts and minds." 1. *In temptation it secures the heart by satisfying the heart.* 2. *It keeps the heart in affliction.* 3. *It keeps the mind by settling the judgment, and keeping doubts and errors out of the mind.*

V. **Its source and the instrumentality by which it works.**—"Through Christ Jesus."—*C. Bradley.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 8, 9.

The Science of Christian Ethics—

I. **Demands the study of every genuine virtue.**—"Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, . . . think on these things" (ver. 8). In regard to what is honourable, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, there is a true and a false standard, and for this reason the apostle here places the true at the beginning, that when the following exhortations are presented, this fact which our experience so often discloses may at once occur to the Christian, and he may be led to examine himself and see whether he also is everywhere seeking for the true (*Schleiermacher*). Genuine virtue has its root in genuine religion. The modern school of ethics, which professes to teaches morality as something apart from spiritual Christianity, is a return to the exploded theories of pagan moralists, an attempt to dress up pre-Christian philosophy in a nineteenth-century garb. The morality that is lovely and of good report is Christian morality—the practical, livable ethics of the New Testament. The ethical terms used in this verse are closely united. The true, the becoming, the right, and the pure are elements of virtue or moral excellence, and when exhibited in practical life are lovely and worthy of all praise. The charm of the Christian character is not the cultivation of one virtue that overshadows all the rest, but the harmonious blending of all the virtues in the unity of the Christian life. Christian ethics should be earnestly studied, not as matters of mere speculation, but because of their supreme importance and utility in the moral conduct of every-day life.

II. **Requires the translation of high moral principles into practical life.**—"Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do" (ver. 9). It is one thing to ponder, admire, and applaud morality; it is another thing to practise it. The apostle not only taught Christian ethics, but practised them, and could point to his own example as worthy of imitation; it was not, "Do as I say," but, "Do as I do." Christian morality is of little value as a mere creed of ethics; its true power is seen in changing, elevating, and refining the life. We have all to lament there is such a wide chasm between theory and practice. Theory may be learned in a brief period; practice is the work of a lifetime. The theory of music may be rapidly apprehended, but the mastery of any one instrument, such as the violin or organ, demands patient and incessant practice. It means detail-work, plod, perseverance, genius. So is it with every virtue of Christian ethics. Theory and practice should go together; the one helps the other; practice more clearly defines theory, and theory more fully apprehended stimulates practice. It is the practice of Christian morality that preaches to the world a gospel that it cannot fail to understand and that is doing so much to renovate it. Lord Bolingbroke, an avowed infidel, declared: "No religion ever appeared in the world whose tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind as the Christian religion. The gospel of Christ is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, benevolence, and universal charity. Supposing Christianity to be a human invention, it is the most amiable and successful invention that ever was imposed on mankind for their good."

III. **Links practical morality with the promise of divine blessing.**—"And the God of peace shall be with you" (ver. 9). The upright man—the man who is striving to shape and mould his life on the ethics of the New Testament—shall not only enjoy peace, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, but the God of peace shall be with him and in him. True religion, in healthy activity, gives, and can alone give, a restfulness of spirit such as the troubles of life are impotent to disturb. The two vital elements of true religion are communion with God and the diligent cultivation of practical holiness—conformity to the will of God in all things. Pray and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, and the God of peace shall be with you, preserving you from unrest and harm. The peace of God is also an active principle, gentle and noiseless in its activity, which will help the soul to grow in ethical symmetry and beauty.

Lessons.—1. *The gospel is the foundation of the highest ethics.* 2. *No system of morality is trustworthy that does not lead to holy practice.* 3. *God helps the man who is honestly striving to live up to his light.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 8. *Mercantile Virtues without Christianity.*

I. **What a man of mercantile honour has.**—He has an attribute of character which is in itself pure, lovely, honourable, and of good report. He has a natural principle of integrity, and under its impulse he may be carried forward to such fine exhibitions of himself as are worthy of all admiration. It is very noble when the simple utterance of his word carries as much security along with it, as if he had accompanied that utterance by the signatures, the securities, and the legal obligations which are required of other men. All the glories of British policy and British valour are far eclipsed by the moral splendour which British faith has thrown over the name and the character of our nation. There is no denying the extended prevalence of a principle of integrity in the commercial world.

II. **What a man of mercantile honour has not.**—He may not have one duteous feeling of reverence which points up-

ward to God. He may not have one wish or one anticipation which points forward to eternity. He may not have any sense of dependence on the Being who sustains him, and who gave him his very principle of honour as part of that interior furniture which He has put into his bosom. He is a man of integrity, and yet he is a man of ungodliness. This natural virtue, when disjoined from a sense of God, is of no religious estimation whatever; nor will it lead to any religious blessing, either in time or in eternity.—*T. Chalmers.*

Ver. 9. *Paul as an Example to Believers.*

I. **He was distinguished by his decision of character in all that relates to religion.**—Constitutionally ardent; zealous as a Pharisee. From the day of his conversion he never faltered, notwithstanding his privations, his dangers, his sufferings. Be decided.

II. **By his care about the culture of the divine life in his own soul.**—The student may desire to know the truth rather than to feel its power. The preacher may be more solicitous about the power of the truth over others than over himself. He never lost sight of the interests of his own soul.

III. **By his devotional habits.**—One would rather be the author of his prayers than of his sermons. The difference between his prayers as a Pharisee and as a Christian. The subject, the spirit, the style of his prayers as a Christian. Be careful. Be not soon shaken in mind or troubled by speculations about the philosophy of prayer.

IV. **By his spirituality and heavenly-mindedness.**—He did not show any interest in the class of worldly objects that might have been expected to interest a man of his order of mind. He was absorbed in "spiritual things." The second coming of Christ had a prominent place in his thoughts. "That day." Cultivate a habitual superiority to the things of time and sense. Seek the things that are above.

V. **By his patient submission to the dispensations of divine providence.**—Rare amount of suffering. Strong feeling, unmurmuring submission. Patient, meek, contented. All from Christian principle. Be resigned.

VI. **By his laborious usefulness.**—Sketch his career. Be useful.—*G. Brooks.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 10—14.

The Joy of a Good Man in Extremity—

I. **Stimulated by the practical evidence of the growth in his converts of Christian thoughtfulness.**—"Your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity" (ver. 10). The Philippians were a hospitable people, as was shown both by Lydia and the gaoler, who insisted on the privilege of ministering to the wants of the apostles in the beginning of their ministry at Philippi. The Church in that city had already sent a liberal contribution to the apostle to help him in his missionary work; and he now rejoices over another practical evidence of their generous thoughtfulness in the timely help they had sent him by the hands of Epaphroditus. Paul and his mission were much in their thoughts, and they were often devising how they might minister to his wants and further the work of the gospel. They were eager to help him more frequently, but lacked opportunity. They valued the gospel so as to be willing to pay for it. It is a gratifying and unmistakable proof of religious growth when we are anxious to contribute of our means, according to our ability, for the spread of the gospel. Liberality in money-giving is a crucial test of genuine godliness. When the commission of excise wrote Wesley, "We cannot doubt you have plate for which you have hitherto neglected to make an entry," his laconic reply was, "I have two silver teaspoons at London, and two at Bristol;

this is all the plate which I have at present, and I shall not buy any more at present while so many around me want bread." It is estimated that he gave away more than £30,000.

II. **Maintained by having mastered the secret of Christian contentment.**—1. *A contentment gained by actual experience of the ups and downs of life.* "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (vers. 11, 12). The checkered and eventful life of the apostle had taught him many lessons, and not the least useful and important was the art of contentment. A man with his varied experience is not easily inconvenienced by fluctuating fortunes. Contentment is gained, not by the abundance of what we possess, but by discovering how much we can do without. "That which we miscall poverty is indeed nature," writes Jeremy Taylor; "and its proportions are the just measures of a man, and the best instruments of content. But when we create needs that God or nature never made, we have erected to ourselves an infinite stock of trouble that can have no period." Most desires are first aroused by comparison with others. Sempronius complained of want of clothes and was much troubled for a new suit, being ashamed to appear in the theatre with his gown a little threadbare; but when he got it, and gave his old clothes to Codrus, the poor man was ravished with joy and went and gave God thanks for his new purchase; and Codrus was made richly fine and cheerfully warm by that which Sempronius was ashamed to wear; and yet their natural needs were both alike.

2. *A contentment inspired by divine strength.*—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (ver. 13). The apostle's contentment was not self-sufficiency, but self-sufficingness; and this was acquired, not only by the experiences of life, but the help of divine grace. He could conceive no circumstances in which that grace was not sufficient. His contented mind he regarded as a gift of God. "I have learnt from Thee, O God," writes Augustine, "to distinguish between the gift and the fruit. The gift is the thing itself, which is given by one who supplies what is needed, as money or raiment; but the fruit is the good and well-ordered will of the giver. It is a gift to receive a prophet and to give a cup of cold water; but it is fruit to do those acts in the name of a prophet and in the name of a disciple. The raven brought a gift to Elias when it brought him bread and flesh, but the widow fruit, because she fed him as a man of God."

III. **Gratefully commends the generosity of those who alleviate his extremity.**—"Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction" (ver. 14). Though the apostle had learned contentment in every situation, and his mind could accommodate itself to every change of circumstances; though he had fresh and inexhaustible sources of consolation within himself, and had been so disciplined as to acquire the mastery over his external condition and to achieve anything in Christ; yet he felt thankful for the sympathy of the Philippian Church, and praised them for it. His humanity was not absorbed in his apostleship, and his heart, though self-sufficed, was deeply moved by such tokens of affection. Though he was contented, he yet felt there was affliction—loss of liberty, jealous surveillance, inability to fulfil the great end of his apostolic mission. This sympathy on the part of the Philippians with the suffering representative of Christ and His cause is the very trait of character which the Judge selects for eulogy at last (Matt. xxv. 35) (*Eadie*).

IV. **Has a divine source.**—"But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly" (ver. 10). He regarded the gift as coming from the Lord, and his joy in its reception was from the same source. He rejoiced the more in this practical evidence of the

love and gratitude of his converts. Every kindness shown to us by others, when it is recognised as coming from God, will augment our joy in Him.

Lessons.—1. *God does not forget His servants in distress.* 2. *A contented spirit is a fruit of divine grace.* 3. *It is a joy to be remembered by those we love.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 10. *Practical Christian Benevolence—*

I. **Is quick to see the needs of God's servants and of the cause in which they faithfully labour.**

II. **Eagerly watches every opportunity for supplying those needs.**

III. **Is a matter of exalted joy to those who fully appreciate both the supply and the motive that prompted it.**

Vers. 11, 12. *Tendency of Christian Principles to produce True Contentment.*

I. **Christianity takes away the natural causes of discontent.**—1. *Pride.* 2. *Self-preference.* 3. *Covetousness.*

II. **Christianity furnishes powerful motives for the exercise of a contented mind.**—1. *The disciples of Christ are under the strongest obligations to walk in the footsteps of their divine Master.* 2. *True Christians are firmly convinced that their lot is chosen for them by their blessed Lord and Master.* 3. *It is chosen for them in infinite love and mercy to their souls.—E. Cooper.*

Ver. 11. *Contentment.*

I. **That a man be content with his own estate without coveting that which is another's.**

II. **That a man be content with his present estate.**—1. *Because that only is properly his own.* 2. *All looking beyond that disquiets the mind.* 3. *The present is ever best.*

III. **That a man be content with any estate.**

IV. **The art of contentment**—1. *Is not learned from nature.* 2. *Or outward things.* 3. *But is taught us by God's Spirit.* 4. *By His promises.* 5. *By the rod of discipline.* 6. *Proficiency in contentment gained*—(1) By despising unjust gain. (2) By moderating worldly desires and care. (3) By carefully using and charitably dispensing what we have. (4) By bearing want and loss with patience.—*R. Sanderson.*

Christian Contentment.

I. **What it is.**—1. *That our desires of worldly good are low and moderate.* 2. *That in all our views of bettering our worldly condition we indulge not immoderate cares.* 3. *That whatever our present condition be, we cheerfully submit to the providence of God in it.* 4. *That we are so easy with our own lot as not to envy others who may be in more prosperous circumstances.* 5. *That we will not use any unlawful means to better our present condition.* 6. *That we make the best of our condition whatever it be.*

II. **How it may be learned.**—1. *Christianity sets in view the most solid principles of contentment and the strongest motives to it.* 2. *Furnishes us with the brightest patterns of contentment to enforce its precepts and prevent our despair of attaining it.*

Lessons.—1. *The present state should be considered as a state of learning.* 2. *More depends on our spirits than upon our outward condition in order to contentment.* 3. *Labour to have our minds so formed that they may be content and tolerably easy in any state of life.*

Ver. 13. *The Source of the Christian's Power.*

I. **The extent of a Christian's ability.**—1. *He is able to discharge every duty.* 2. *He is able to endure every trial.* 3. *He is able to brave every suffering.* 4. *He is able to overcome every temptation.*

II. **The source of the Christian's ability.**—1. *Christ strengthens us by His teachings.* 2. *Christ strengthens us by His example.* 3. *Christ strengthens us by the moral influence of His death*

as a sacrifice for our sin. 4. *Christ strengthens us by uniting us to Himself, and bestowing on us, in answer to the prayer of faith, the influences of the Holy Spirit.* Christ is the fountain of spiritual strength.—*G. Brooks.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 15—19.

A Generous Church—

I. **Spontaneously contributing to the earliest efforts in the propagation of the gospel.**—1. *Its generosity conspicuous by its solitary example.* "No Church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only" (ver. 15). In the account between us, the giving was on your part, the receiving on mine. The Philippians had followed Paul with their bounty when he left Macedonia and came to Corinth. We are not to wait for others in a good work, saying, "I will do so when others do it." We must go forward though alone (*Fausset*). Their liberality followed him on distant missionary tours, and when no longer in their own province. One single example of generosity is an inspiration and a hint to others. Any Church will wither into narrowing dimensions when it confines its benefactions to itself.

2. *Its generosity was repeated.*—"For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity" (ver. 16). Even in Thessalonica, still in their own province and not far from Philippi, they more than once contributed to his help, and thus rendered him less dependent on those among whom he was breaking new ground. Help in time of need is a pleasant memory; and the apostle delights in reminding the Philippians of their timely and thoughtful generosity. Repeated kindnesses should increase our gratitude.

II. **The gifts of a generous Church are appreciated as indicating growth in practical religion.**—"Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account" (ver. 17). It is not the gift he covets, but that rich spiritual blessing which the gift secures to its donors. The apostle wished them to reap the growing spiritual interest of their generous expenditure. Not for his own sake but theirs does he desire the gift. He knew that the state of mind which devised and contributed such a gift was blessed in itself, that it must attract divine blessing, for it indicated the depth and amount of spiritual good which the apostle had done to them, and for which they thus expressed their gratitude; and it showed their sympathy with the cause of Christ, when they had sought to enable their spiritual founder in former days to give his whole time, without distraction or physical exhaustion, to the work of his apostleship. This was a spiritual condition which could not but meet with the divine approbation and secure the divine reward (*Eadie*).

III. **The gifts of a generous Church are accepted as a sacrifice well pleasing to God.**—"Having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God" (ver. 18). It was a gift in which God delighted, fragrant as the sweet-smelling incense which burned in the censer. It was felt that God is supreme Benefactor and that all possessions are His gracious gift, that these have an end beyond the mere personal enjoyment of them, that they may and ought to be employed in God's service, and that the spirit of such employment is the entire dedication of these to Him. The money, while contributed to the apostle, was offered to God. They discharged a spiritual function in doing a secular act—"the altar sanctified the gift" (*Ibid.*). Giving to the cause of Christ is worship, acceptable and well-pleasing to God. It belongs to the same class of acts as the presentation of sacrifices under the old economy, which was the central act of worship. For the proper use of no talent is self-denial more needed than for that of money.

IV. **The gifts of a generous Church will be recompensed with abundant spiritual blessing.**—"But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus," (ver. 19). The money we give to God's cause is well invested, and will yield a rich return: spiritual blessing in return for material gifts; this is beyond the power of arithmetic to compute. This was no rash and unwarrantable promise on the part of Paul. He knew something of the riches of the divine generosity, and was justified in assuring his kind benefactors of God's perfect supply of every want of body and soul, bestowed not grudgingly but with royal beneficence.

Lessons.—1. *Gratitude for blessings received should prompt generosity.* 2. *Money is never more wisely employed than in forwarding the cause of God.* 3. *Our gifts to God are handsomely rewarded.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 15, 16. *Christian Generosity*—

I. **Indicates a genuine interest in the work of God and love for its ministers.**

II. **Is especially valuable in prosecuting pioneer mission work.**

III. **Should not be conspicuous by one solitary example, but be continuous and commensurate with the pressing needs of the work of God.**

Vers. 17, 18. *Liberality a Fruit of the Christian Life.*

I. **It is not a gift, but the discharge of a just claim.**

II. **Paul did not desire a gift only to benefit himself, because he wanted nothing.**

III. **Liberality is a fruit of the Christian life by discharging a debt to which we stood engaged.**

IV. **Liberality is an advantage in the exercise of our patience before the day of trial come upon us.**

V. **As God will punish the neglect of this duty, so if we perform it He will count Himself in debt to us.**—*Farindon.*

Ver. 19. *Man's Need supplied from God's Riches.*

I. **Look at man's necessity.**

II. **God's wealth.**—Its abundance; its excellence.

III. **The supply the apostle anticipates for this necessity out of this wealth.**

Learn.—1. *Contentment with our present lot.* 2. *Confidence for the future.*—*C. Bradley.*

Our Need and our Supply.

1. **Examine the scope of the promise.**—There is danger of fanaticism in the interpretation of truth. God promises to supply our need, but not to gratify our wishes or whims. Some of us God sees cannot bear wealth, and so it is not given us; but as our day is so is our strength.

II. **The supply.**—The supply is not according to our deserts, but according to the riches of His glory. The resources of the Trinity are drawn upon. His wealth is unbounded. He is not a cistern, but a fountain.

III. **The Medium.**—This supply comes through Christ. We can claim it in no other name. But God ordains means and puts us under conditions. As in agriculture, so here, we are to work in harmony with God's established methods if we would secure fruits.—*Homiletic Monthly.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 20—23.

Last Words.

I. **A glowing ascription of praise to the divine Giver of every blessing.**—"Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (ver. 20). To God, even our Father, the kind and liberal Supplier of every want to every

child, be eternal glory ascribed. The ascription of praise is the language of spiritual instinct which cannot be repressed. Let the child realise its relation to the Father who feeds it, clothes it, and keeps it in life, who enlightens and guides it, pardons and purifies it, strengthens and upholds it, and all this in Christ Jesus, and it cannot but in its glowing consciousness cry out, "Now to God and our Father be the glory for ever." The "Amen" is a fitting conclusion. As the lips shut themselves, the heart surveys again the facts and the grounds of praise, and adds, "So be it" (*Eadie*).

II. **Christian salutations.**—"Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household" (vers. 21, 22). Salutations are tokens of personal interest and living fellowship which should not be lightly esteemed. The apostolic salutations teach that the Christian religion does not make men unfriendly and stubborn, but courteous and friendly (*Lange*). The reference to the saints in Cæsar's household may mean either kinsfolk of Nero or servants in the palace. It is improbable that so many near relatives of the emperor should have yielded themselves to Christ as to be designated by this phrase, and it is not likely to suppose that a combination of these two classes would be grouped under the one head. In all likelihood the reference is to servants holding more or less important positions in the imperial household —some, no doubt, slaves; and it is a suggestive testimony to the unwearied diligence and influence of the apostle in using every opportunity to make known the saving grace of the gospel. To explain to any the reason for his imprisonment was an occasion for preaching Christ. "O Rome, Rome!" exclaims Starke, "how greatly hast thou changed! Formerly thou hadst true saints even in the household of a pagan and tyrannical emperor; but now hast thou false saints, especially in and around the so-called chair of Peter and at the court of his supposed successor."

III. **Final benediction.**—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (ver. 23). The oldest MSS. read, "Be with your spirit." It is important that the grace of God should be not only around us, but with us and in us. The benediction is a prayer that the divine favour may be conferred upon them, enriching the noblest elements of their nature with choicest blessings, making them to grow in spiritual wisdom, beauty, and felicity, that grace may ultimately merge into glory.

Lessons.—1. *Praise should be offered to God in all things.* 2. *The Christian spirit is full of kindly courtesy.* 3. *It is a comprehensive prayer that invokes the blessing of divine grace.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 20. *Eternal Praise should be offered unto God—*

I. For mercies enjoyed in the past.

II. For mercies which as our Father He holds for us and bestows on us in the present.

III. That the glory of His character may become increasingly conspicuous in His works of creation, providence, and grace.

Vers. 21, 22. *Christian Courtesy—*

I. Elevates and sanctifies the amenities of social life.

II. Awakens and strengthens mutual sympathy and help in the Christian life.

III. Should be exercised by Christians of all ranks and conditions.

Ver. 23. *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—*

I. Is the sum of all we can need for ourselves or desire for others.

II. Is a revelation of His own character and of His regard for us.

III. May be sought with the utmost confidence and enjoyed in ever-increasing measure.

THE
EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

Colossæ and its people.—In Asia Minor, a few days' journey to the east of Ephesus, is a district which for natural beauty, as described by many travellers, is hardly to be surpassed. At the foot of Mount Cadmus—now known as Baba Dagh, or "the Father of Mountains"—near the stream of the Lycus, a tributary of the Mæander, stood the town of Colossæ. Within a day's journey stood Hierapolis and Laodicea, the latter the home of a Church in later years where a poor, half-hearted religion was a constant offence to God. Owing to its political significance, it quite eclipsed Colossæ, as Hierapolis also did, owing to its natural advantages as a health-resort or watering-place. Though at one time Colossæ was a flourishing town, where the vast forces of Xerxes or those of Cyrus could halt, in this century it was only with difficulty and some uncertainty that its exact site was discovered. Chonos (so called from the funnel-shaped holes into which the river drops) is its modern substitute, though from two to three miles south of the site of Colossæ.

The inhabitants of Colossæ were largely of Phrygian derivation, highly religious, if dread of the supernatural in every form constitutes religion, but ready to yield themselves up to the wildest orgies and the most degradingly sensual types of worship. But there were also many Jews in the town, as we learn not only from the indications in this letter, but from other sources. It was not the only occasion in history when travelled Jews had learnt to blend with their ancestral religion the philosophical or theosophical opinions of the neighbourhood where they had settled. The result was an amalgam very hard to catalogue. The Hellenism of these Phrygian Jews did as little for them as in later days it did for Heine, the German Jew. So, because its results were pernicious, the uncompromising opponent of Pharisaic dead works and herald of one God set himself to make known to the Colossians the sufficiency of Christian doctrine without admixture of heathen wisdom (ii. 8, 9) or the administration of Jewish rites (ii. 11).

Occasion, aim, time, and place of composition.—Epaphras, a member of the Colossian Church, and to whom the whole neighbourhood was indebted as the bringer of gospel tidings, had given St. Paul an account of the state of the Church to which he ministered, with intimations of the perils threatening it. This it was which led the apostle to send Tychicus with this letter. The runaway slave Onesimus accompanied him, sent back to Philemon his master in Colossæ by St. Paul.

The aim of the apostle in writing the letter was chiefly to warn the Colossians against the specious errors of certain teachers who had tried to unite Christianity with Judaism, and these to theosophical notions. The results of this blend could only be regarded with a pitiful smile. It was pernicious, and, with all its semblance of humility, immoral. Its main offence to the apostle was that it dishonoured his Lord, "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation."

Lightfoot thinks this letter, with those to Ephesus and Philemon, was sent by Tychicus "towards the close of the apostle's captivity in Rome, about the year 63." Meyer, who contends that it was sent, not from Rome, but from Cæsarea, thinks 60 or 61 was the date. The ancient tradition was that the letter emanated from a Roman prison, and the reasons given against this are too slender to set it aside in favour of Cæsarea.

Style of the epistle.—"The style of the epistle is somewhat laboured. It lacks the spontaneity, the fire, the passion, the tender emotion which mark most of St. Paul's letters. The reason for this is twofold. It is partly because he is addressing strangers, the members of Churches which he had not directly founded, and to whom his expressions did not flow forth from the same full spring of intimate affection. It is still more because he is refuting errors with which he was not familiar, and which he had not witnessed in their direct workings. . . . When he was a little more familiar with the theme (in writing Ephesians) he writes with more fervency and ease. . . . In the close similarity between these two, and yet in the strongly marked individuality of each, we have one of the most indisputable proofs of the genuineness of both. . . . If Colossians has less of the attractive personal element and the winning pathos of other letters of St. Paul, it is still living, terse, solid, manly, vigorous; and brief though it be, it still, as Calvin says, contains the nucleus of the gospel" (*Farrar*).

Outline of the epistle.

Introduction. i. 1, 2, greeting. 3—8, thanksgiving. 9—14, prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.

i. 15—23. Main theme of the epistle. Christ's personal supremacy and the universal efficacy of His mediatorial work.

24—29. The apostle's personal explanation of his motive in addressing them.

ii. 1—7. His interest in the highest welfare of Christians unknown to him.

8—15. Warning against a philosophy born of earth, able only to deal externally with outbursts of sin as contrasted with the complete putting away of it by Christ's death and resurrection.

16—23. A protest against the attempt to foist precepts and prohibitions on those who in Christ have passed beyond the stage of legalism.

iii. 1—17. The sufficiency, for conduct, of living consistently with the life hid with Christ in God, which is fatal, as it grows, to every form and manifestation of the old and corrupt life.

18—22. Duties of wives (18), husbands (19), children (20), fathers (21), servants (22).

23—25. Motives, incentives, and deterrents in service.

iv. 1. Duties of masters, and motive of conduct.

2—18. Sundry exhortations, commendations, and greetings.

The letter concludes with the apostle's autograph signature, a touching reference to his " bonds," and a benediction.

CHAPTER I.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.**—Here, as in the Ephesian epistle, St. Paul traces his apostolate to the will of God. It does not seem as if any reason could be given why in these two epistles he uses the phrase and omits it in the Philippians. **Timotheus our brother.**—If Philemon, who was a Colossian Christian, had met St. Paul at Ephesus, probably he had seen Timothy, too, and would no doubt say to the Church how the apostle valued him (Phil. ii. 19).

Ver. 2. **To the saints and faithful brethren.**—We may observe that such a phrase is characteristic of St. Paul's later epistles; in the earlier it was "to the Church." It seems better thus to translate than to give the meaning "to the holy and believing brethren" (see on Eph. i. 1). **Grace . . . and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**—Not "grace" from the Father and "peace" from the Lord Jesus Christ, as the usual benediction shows—"The grace of our Lord Jesus." "Whatsoever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son" (John v. 19).

Ver. 3. **We give thanks to God.**—The apostle here, as usual, gives credit for all that is worthy in his readers, though the tidings from Colossæ had been disquieting.

Ver. 4. **Having heard of your faith.**—This last word might possibly mean "fidelity," the steadiness of an unwavering loyalty. But it is better to take it as the act of personal trust. **Love to all the saints.**—This was the distinguishing trait of all Christians—love one for another (John xiii. 35). How often have we heard the irony, "How these Christians love one another!" We are not warranted in withholding love until men are paragons of spiritual perfection—all in Christ are "saints."

Ver. 5. **For the hope.**—This word completes the triad, though the order is changed, and hope here is the object—the thing hoped for. **Laid up for you in heaven.**—It is the same word in Luke xix. 20, "laid up in a napkin"; in 2 Tim. iv. 8, "henceforth there is laid up"; and in Heb. ix. 27, "it is appointed unto [laid up for] men once to die." **The word of the truth of the gospel.**—Not to be interpreted into "the truly evangelic word." There is an imposing sound in the phrase meant to agree with the thing denoted.

Ver. 6. **In all the world.**—A hyperbolic expression, by which the apostle at the world's centre, Rome, seems to say the messengers of the gospel, go forth to the utmost bounds of the empire. The faith you have received is no local cult, nor is it an ephemeral excitement. **And bringeth forth fruit.**—The R.V. adds to "bearing fruit," "and increasing." It is not a gospel that is decadent, on which a few fruits may be found, but with too evident traces that soon fruitfulness will be past.

Ver. 7. **As ye learned of Epaphras.**—Short for Epaphroditus, but not he of Phil. ii. 25. He is one of the Colossians; beyond that and his prayerful zeal for them we know nothing of the only one whom St. Paul calls "a fellow-servant."

Ver. 9. **Do not cease to pray for you, and to desire.**—R.V. "pray and make request." The general notion comes first, then the particulars; so in Mark xi. 24. In the Lord's Prayer there are several "petitions" or "requests." **Knowledge.**—Here represents the advanced knowledge of the initiated. "Spiritual understanding" is the use in the realm of things spiritual of the faculty which, as employed in physical research, makes the difference between the man of scientific method and the empiric. Compare the union of "wisdom" and "spiritual understanding" with our Lord's words, "Thou hast hid these things from the *wise* and *prudent*.

Ver. 10. **Walk worthy.**—"The end of all knowledge, the apostle would say, is conduct" (*Lightfoot*). The previous verse taken with this gives the "theory and practice" of religion. **Unto all pleasing.**—With the end ever before you of being approved by God. For the same combination, see 1 Thess. iv. 1. **Being fruitful . . . and increasing.**—Like the gospel itself see ver. 6).

Ver. 11. **Strengthened with all might according to His glorious power.**—Lit. "with all

power made powerful," etc. The two words representing "might" and "power" have become familiar in "dynamite" and the termination of "auto-*crat*"; the one indicates stored-up energy, the other victorious or ruling force. **Patience and longsuffering.**—The first word indicates the attitude of an unfainting mind when things go wrong; the second the quiet endurance under irritation from others, the being "not soon angry."

Ver. 12. **Made us meet.**—Duly qualified us, gave us competence. Just as a man needs to be a qualified practitioner of medicine or the law, so these Colossians are recognised as fit and proper persons for participation in the kingdom of light.

Ver. 13. **Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.**—The metaphor commenced in the previous verse is carried on here. The settlement in the land flowing with milk and honey is preceded by deliverance with a high hand from the house of bondage—the land of thick darkness. **And hath translated us.**—The same word by which the Jewish historian describes the carrying over of the Israelites to Assyria by Tiglath-Pileser. The apostle regards the deliverance, so far as the Deliverer is concerned, as a thing accomplished. **His dear Son.**—The A.V. margin has become the R.V. text, "The Son of His love." We do not again find this expression; but as there is "no darkness at all" in God, who "is love," so His Son, into whose kingdom we come, reveals the love of the Father.

Ver. 14. **In whom we have redemption.**—A release effected in consideration of a ransom. See on the verse Eph. i. 7. The forgiveness of our sins—lit. "the dismissal of our sins."

Ver. 15. **Who is the image of the invisible God.**—In 2 Cor. iv. 4 St. Paul had so named Christ. "Beyond the very obvious notion of *likeness*, the word for image involves the idea of *representation* and *manifestation*" (*Lightfoot*). Man is said to be the image of God (1 Cor. xi. 7), and to have been created in the image of God, as an image on a coin may represent Cæsar, even though unrecognisable almost. Christ is "the very image" (Heb. i. 3) of God, able to say, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." **Firstborn of every creature.**—"Not that He is included as part of the creation, but that the relation of the whole creation to Him is determined by the fact that He is the 'firstborn of all creation' (R.V.), so that without Him creation could not be" (*Cremer*). The main ideas involved in the word are (1) priority to all creation; (2) sovereignty over all creation (*Lightfoot*).

Ver. 16. **Thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers.**—That Paul believed in a heavenly hierarchy can scarcely be doubted; but this letter shows that in Colossæ it had become an elaborate superstition.

Ver. 18. **And He is the head of the body, the Church.**—As He held priority of all creation, so also His is the name above every name in the new creation. **The firstborn from the dead.**—The cardinal point of the apostle's faith.

Ver. 19. **For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell.**—The great question on this verse is—seeing that "the Father" has been added—what is the nominative to the word rendered "it pleased"? At least three are possible: (1) "the Father," as A.V., R.V., and many commentators; (2) "all the fulness," etc.; and (3) "the Son was pleased." Lightfoot urges that, as (2) would be an anachronism, and (3) a hopeless confusion of the theology, "the Father was well pleased" seems to be the best rendering.

Ver. 20. **To reconcile all things unto Himself.**—The word "reconcile" is meant to indicate the restoration of a lost friendship; the re-establishment of peaceful relations. It is a good specimen of the care with which St. Paul's advanced expressions are selected.

Ver. 21. **You, that were sometime alienated.**—Does not mean, of course, occasionally alienated, but as the R.V. gives it, "being in time past alienated"—up to the time of the reconciliation *always* estranged. **Enemies in your mind by wicked works.**—The most interesting question here is whether God is reconciled to the sinner or only the sinner to God. Is "enemies" to mean "hostile" or "hateful"? Lightfoot says, "It is the mind of man, not the mind of God, which must undergo a change that a reunion may be effected."

Ver. 22. **In the body of His flesh through death.**—When a teacher has to be explicit it may seem to those familiar with the subject as if he were verbose or tautological. So here the body is no phantasm, but fleshly and mortal. **To present you holy.**—They were professedly holy "saints" (ver. 2), and the final purpose of their reconciliation is reproachless saintship (on this word, and "unblamable," see Eph. i. 4). **Unreprovable in His sight.**—It is a lofty eminence to which the holy apostle invites us to look in this word. The light in which we walk—fierce indeed towards sin—reveals no evil, so that the most captious critic has no objection (Tit. ii. 8).

Ver. 23. **Grounded and settled, and not moved away.**—In that land of volcanic agency the readers would perceive only too readily the graphic force of this metaphor. Where stone buildings tumbled over like a house of cards, the figure of a faith, proof against all shocks, was effective (see Heb. xii. 28). **Every creature under heaven.**—The same rhetorical form of expression as in ver. 6, affirming the universal fitness of the gospel as well as its wide dissemination. **Whereof I Paul am made a minister.**—Wonder that increases and unceasing gratitude are in these words—that the persecutor should serve the faith he once destroyed.

Ver. 24. **Fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.**—R.V. "and fill up on

my part that which is lacking." How we seem to hear through these words the cry of the Head of the Church, "Why persecutest thou Me?" And now the persecutor shares the pain of Christ and those to whom it is granted as a favour to suffer for His sake (Phil. i. 29).

Vers. 25-27. See notes on Eph. iii. 7 ff.

Ver. 28. **Whom we preach.**—What a glorious comprehensiveness there is in preaching Him in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead! Here is nothing narrow. **Warning every man.**—R.V. "admonishing." It is a direction of the reflective faculty—a reproof administered with intent to amend the conduct. It corresponds to "Repent ye!" **And teaching every man.**—The positive side of which the warning is the negative. It is not enough to tell a man he is wrong—the right must be indicated; so the heralds of the gospel followed up "Repent ye" with "Believe the gospel." Note the repeated "every man." Exclusiveness which shuts the door in the face of any "weak brother for whom Christ died" is utterly strange to the teaching of St. Paul. **That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.**—St. Paul, and every true successor, labours for this end; and, as ver. 22 shows, in so doing all are "workers together with God." We have the idea of presentation elsewhere in St. Paul, as where he speaks of presenting his converts as a chaste virgin to Christ. The risk of offering a tainted animal for sacrifice is as nothing in comparison of offering a hypocrite as a trophy of the gospel.

Ver. 29. **I also labour.**—The word implies strenuous effort. "The racer who takes care to slack his speed whenever he is in danger of breaking into a perspiration will not win the prize" (*Maclaren*). **Striving.**—Lit. "agonising," as in Luke xiii. 24. Like a stripped gymnast, every encumbrance cast off. The same word in 1 Tim. vi. 12. "Fight the good fight."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 1.

Apostolic Salutation.

In this verse we have *a description of the office and character* of the persons from whom the salutation emanates.

I. **An exalted and important office.**—"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ." An apostle is one *sent*. Paul was commissioned to declare the grandest truths—truths destined to illumine and upraise mankind. His sphere was the world, his audience the generations of every age. The work of the apostle lives to-day—its vigour is perennial. His was no empty, unmeaning title. It involved incredible thought, overburdening care, incessant toil, unparalleled suffering. It was an office created by the circumstances of the time. That period was the beginning of a gigantic campaign against the consolidated errors and sins of ages. An ordinary officer can keep and govern a garrison; but it requires a gifted general to marshal and direct the militant host in the daring manœuvres of war. In the divine government of the world the occasion calls forth the man.

II. **The authority that designates and qualifies.**—"By the will of God." The will of God is the great originating and dynamic moral force of the universe. That will raised Paul to the apostleship, and invested him with all essential qualifications. The miraculous incidents of the journey to Damascus (Acts ix.) formed a crisis in his career. The startling discovery as to the character of the Being he had madly opposed evoked the utterance of a changed and willing heart: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" That was the sublime moment of his *sending*. In undertaking the highest work for God, it is not enough that we possess learning, gifts, piety, unless with all there be a consciously divine commission. There are crises when we can gain fresh inspiration for the exigencies of the work only by falling back on the clearest call and appointment of the divine will.

III. **A familiar Christian relationship.**—"Timotheus, our brother." Paul was the means of Timothy's conversion; and in another place he calls him his "own son in the faith." Here he recognises him on the more equal footing of a brother. Christianity is a brotherhood. Not a low, debasing communism that drags down all to its own common level, but a holy confederacy in which men of all ranks, ages, and talents unite. The equality of Christian brotherhood is

based on a moral and spiritual foundation. The minister whose reputation is won and position assured loses nothing by honouring his younger brethren.

IV. **Union of sympathy and desire.**—"Paul . . . *and* Timothy." The greatest intimacy existed between the two, notwithstanding the disparity in rank and abilities. There were qualities in Timothy that elicited the admiration and love of the great apostle. They were constant companions in travel; and Timothy was often a source of comfort to Paul in captivity. They had a common sympathy in the propagation of the gospel, and with the changing fortunes of the newly founded Churches, and joined in prayer for their welfare. The union of Timothy with himself also strengthened the testimony of the apostle regarding the supernatural character of the truths declared.

Lessons.—*Christian salutation*—1. *Takes its value from the character of the sender.* 2. *Should be pervaded with genuine sympathy.* 3. *Implies a mutual interest in the success of Christian work.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 2.

Apostolic Estimate of Christian Character.

I. **Suggestive phases of Christian character.**—"Saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossæ."

1. *Saints.*—This implies union with God and a personal participation in His righteousness. This is the root of the saintly life. Faith in Christ is the point and means of junction. Canonisation cannot make a saint. Must be saintly experience to produce saintly conduct. A holy reputation excites to action consistent with itself. Nehemiah refused to hide from threatened assassination as an act beneath his well-known character for high integrity and bravery (Neh. vi. 11).

2. *Faithful brethren which are at Colossæ.*—Implies union with each other. They embraced a common faith, and held steadfastly together amid the agitations of false teachers and the defections of the wavering. Christianity blends the strangest elements. It is a foe to all national enmities and prejudices. Paul, a Jew, Timothy, a Grecian, and the Colossians, a mixture of several races, are here united in a holy and faithful brotherhood. "Here the Gentile met the Jew whom he had been accustomed to regard as an enemy of the human race; the Roman met the lying Greek sophist, the Syrian slave, the gladiator born beside the Danube. In brotherhood they met, the natural birth and kindred of each forgotten, the baptism alone remembered in which they had been born again to God and to each other" (*Ecce Homo*).

3. *The sublime origin of the Christian character.*—"*In* Christ." Character is the development and crystallisation of a *life*. The character of the blossom and fruit is decided by the vital energy in the tree. Christ is the unfathomable fount of all spiritual life; the ideal pattern and formative force of a perfect character. He is the centre and bond of all true brotherhood.

II. **The salutation supplicates the bestowment of highest divine blessings.**—1. *Grace.* A term of vast significance, inclusive of all the blessings that can flow from the superabundant and free favour of God. Grace is the source of all *temporal* good—life, health, preservation, success, felicity; and of all *spiritual* benefactions—pardon, soul-rest, guidance, strength, deliverance, purity, final triumph. The generosity of God is illimitable.

2. *Peace.*—Grace expresses the spirit and fulness in which divine manifestations come to us; peace the result they accomplish in us. *Peace with God.* Sin has thrown human nature into a state of discord and enmity. The reception of grace must ever precede the enjoyment of peace. The universal mistake is, in first seeking, through many avenues, the happiness which peace

with God alone can bring, instead of accepting humbly, penitently, believingly, the grace of God in Christ. *Peace with each other*—peace in the Church. How great a blessing is this! One turbulent spirit can ruffle the tranquillity of thousands.

3. *The source of the blessings desired.*—"From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The Father's love and the Son's work are the sole source and cause of every blessing to humanity, while the Holy Spirit is the agent of their communication. The Trinity is ever harmonious in acts of beneficence; the divine fountain is inexhaustible.

Learn.—1. *The broad, deep charity of the apostolic spirit.* 2. *The scope and temper of the prayers we should offer for the race.*

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

The Causes of Ministerial Thanksgiving.

It is customary with the apostle to begin his epistles with the ardent expression of thanksgiving. This showed the devout habit of his mind, his constant and emphatic recognition of the grand source of good, and his deep interest in the spiritual condition of those to whom he wrote.

I. **Thanksgiving an essential element in prayer.**—"We give thanks, . . . praying always for you" (ver. 3). The participle marks the thanksgiving as part of the prayer, and the adverb makes it prominent, indicating that when they *prayed for them they always gave thanks.* There is no true prayer without thanksgiving. Gratitude intensifies the soul's sense of dependence on God, and prompts the cry for the needed help; and, on the other hand, earnest prayer naturally glides into fervent thankfulness. As one sin is interlinked with and produced by another, so the use of one grace begets another. The more temporal things are used, the more they wear and waste; but spiritual things are strengthened and increased with exercise. Every spiritual grace has in it the seed of an endless reproductiveness. Underlying every thanksgiving for others is a spirit of tender, disinterested love. Moved by this passion, the apostle, from the midst of imprisonment and sorrow, could soar on the wings of gratitude and prayer to heaven. "Thanksgiving will be the bliss of eternity."

II. **The Being to whom all thanksgiving is due.**—"To God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 3). God is the Father of Jesus Christ, not only as God, by an eternal generation and communication of His whole essence unto Him in a method to us mysterious and ineffable, but also as man by virtue of the personal union of the two natures in Christ, and in a special sense exceeding every other way in which He is Father to men or angels. Thus God and the Father of our Lord Jesus are one; the particle "and" being exegetic of the same thing, not copulative of something different. All our blessings have their source in the bosom of the divine Father. Christ is the only revealer of the Father, and the active agent in bestowing the paternal benefits on humanity. The paternal aspect of the divine character as unfolded by Jesus Christ is most fascinating and assuring; and the loving heart delights to trace its blessings up to the Parent of all good, and to render Him devout and grateful praise.

III. **This thanksgiving was grounded on the reputation of their faith in the Author of Christianity.**—"Since we heard of your faith in Christ" (ver. 4).

1. *Christ is the object and foundation of all true faith.*—He is so as the divinely consecrated Deliverer of the race. The grandeur of His redeeming work and the dignity and glory of His character are suggested by the titles here given to Him. Man must believe in Christ, not as an abstract truth, not as a poetic conception, not as a dim impersonal force acting in the sphere of ideality, but as a divine-human *person*—the anointed Saviour.

2. *True faith is the root principle of the Christian life.*—Without it neither love nor hope could exist. All the graces that strengthen and beautify the Christian character must grow out of faith.

3. *True faith is ever manifest.*—"Since we heard." It is seen in the changed disposition and conduct of the individual believer. It is marked by the anxious Christian worker, and becomes known to a wide circle of both friends and foes. Epaphras rejoiced to bear tidings of the fact; and the soul of the apostle, since he heard, glowed with grateful praise. Happy the people whose highest reputation is their faith in Jesus!

IV. **This thanksgiving was grounded on their possession of an expansive Christian love.**—"And of the love which ye have to all the saints" (ver. 4). Love to Christ is necessarily involved, for love to the saints is really a generous, unselfish affection for Christ's image in them. Love is all-embracing. Peculiarities, defects, differences of opinion, distance, are no barriers to its penetrating ardour. It is the unanswerable evidence of moral transformation (1 John iii. 14). It is the grandest triumph over the natural enmity of the human heart. It is the indissoluble bond of choicest fellowship.

> "While we walk with God in light,
> God our hearts doth still unite;
> Dearest fellowship we prove,
> Fellowship in Jesu's love."

V. **This thanksgiving was further grounded on their enjoyment of a well-sustained hope.**—The grace of hope naturally springs out of and is properly associated with the preceding two. Not one member of the holy triad can be divorced from the other without irreparable damage; without, in fact, the loss of that which is the resultant of the three—viz. active religious life. "Faith rests on the past; love works in the present; hope looks to the future. They may be regarded as the efficient, material, and final causes respectively of the spiritual life" (*Lightfoot*).

1. *The character of this hope.*—"The hope which is laid up for you in heaven" (ver. 5). It is the prospect of future heavenly felicity. Hope is put for the object hoped for—the hope of possessing a spiritual inheritance whose wealth never diminishes, whose splendours never fade; the hope of seeing Christ in all His regal glory; of being like Him; of dwelling with Him for ever. A prospect like this lifts the soul above the meannesses, disappointments, and sufferings of the present limited life.

2. *The security of this hope.*—"Laid up." This priceless inheritance is safely deposited as a precious jewel in God's secret coffer. There no pilfering hands can touch it, no breath can tarnish, no rust corrode, no moth corrupt. Earthly treasures vanish, and sometimes, to God's people, nothing but the treasure of hope remains. The saint's enduring riches are in the future, locked up in the heavenly casket. Where the treasure is there the heart should ever be.

3. *The source and foundation of this hope.*—"Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel" (ver. 5). The gospel is based on unchangeable truth, and is therefore worthy of universal credence. It alone unfolds the mysteries and glories of the future. The hope of heaven rests, not on the discoveries of human philosophy, but on the revelations of the true gospel. In vain do men seek it elsewhere. By the preaching of the gospel this hope is made known to man. How dismal the outlook where hope is unknown!

Lessons.—1. *We should thank God for others more on account of their spiritual than temporal welfare.* 2. *Learn what are the essential elements of the Christian character—faith, love, hope.* 3. *The proclamation of the gospel should be welcomed, and its message pondered.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 3-5. *Good News and its Good Effects.*

I. **The good news, what it was.**—That certain at Colossæ had not only the gospel, but had known the grace of God in truth, and were now joined to Christ by faith and to His people by love.

II. **What were the results.**—1. *Abundant thanksgiving to the God of redemption.* 2. *Constant prayer.* 3. *This epistle.*

III. **Application.**—1. *It is well that ministers should be informed of the success of the gospel, both for their own encouragement and to secure their sympathy, prayers, and counsel for the young converts.* 2. *Established Christians and especially ministers should assure young converts of the gratitude, joy, and sympathy they feel and the prayers they present on their behalf.* 3. *If our hearts are right, we shall rejoice at the success of the gospel.*—*Preacher's Magazine.*

Ver. 5. *Hope a Stimulus to Christian Perseverance*—

I. **In gaining the heavenly reward.**

II. **Because the heavenly reward is secure.**—"Laid up for you."

III. **Is based on truth already known.**—"Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 6—8.

The True Gospel universally the Same.

Wherever the gospel comes it carries with it the ineffaceable impress of its divine origin, and of its universal adaptability to the condition of humanity. There are certain truths that are self-evident to the understanding, and are not susceptible of proof. They are axiomatic, and must be admitted as such before any satisfactory system can be constructed upon them. Of this character are the fundamental truths of the gospel. Their authority is supreme, and their evidential force irresistible. But a truth may be universally self-evident, and not be universally adopted. It is at this point the guilt of the unbeliever is incurred. The gospel comes to mankind with ever-accumulating evidences of its divine truthfulness; but men resist it. This is the condemnation. "He that believeth on the Son is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already" (John iii. 18). The false teachers, against whom the apostle warns the Colossians, sought to spoil the gospel by the intermixture of ideas from Jew and Gentile.

I. **The true gospel is universally the same in its adaptation and enterprise.**—"Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world" (ver. 6). The gospel, though first proclaimed to the Jews, was not confined to them. It reached, penetrated, and changed the Colossians. In them all races were represented. Their conversion was typical of the possibilities of the gospel for all. The world's greatest blessings are not indigenous, are not even sought; they are sent from above. There is not a human being the gospel cannot benefit; it adapts itself to the wants of all. The gospel started from Judea with a world-wide mission, and was eager to fulfil it. Its enterprise was irresistible. It soon spread throughout Asia, Europe, and Africa—the regions embracing the Roman empire, which was then virtually the whole world. Its marvellous propagation proved its universal adaptability. The celebrated systems of philosophy among the Grecians lived only in the soil that produced them. Heresies are at best ethnic; truth is essentially catholic. In less than a quarter of a century Christianity was diffused through the entire world. The success of Mahometanism was of a different character and effected by different means. It depended more on the

scimitar than the Koran. Alexander, Sesostris, and others achieved similar conquests, and as rapidly, by the force of arms. The victories of the gospel were won by moral weapons. It is the greatest privilege of any nation to possess the gospel, and its most solemn duty to make it known to the world.

II. **The true gospel is universally the same in its results.**—"Bringeth forth fruit, and *increaseth*" (as the most valuable MSS. read) "as it doth also in you" (ver. 6). The effects produced on the Colossians by their reception of the gospel were a sample of the results in other parts of the world. The fruit-bearing denotes its inward and subjective influence on the soul and life; the increasing refers to its outward and diffusive influence as it makes progress in the world. The metaphor used by the apostle suggests that the gospel, as a tree, not only bears fruit, but grows, sending forth its roots more firmly and widely, and extending its branches in the air. Thus it bears fruit and makes advancement (*Spence*). There are some plants which exhaust themselves in bearing fruit and then wither. The gospel is a plant whose seed is in itself, and its external growth keeps pace with its reproductive energy. We cannot monopolise the benefits of the gospel to ourselves; it is intended for the world, and wherever it comes it brings forth fruit. It is intensely practical, and aims at results, corresponding with its character, purpose, and power.

III. **The true gospel is universally the same in the manner of its reception.**—"Since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth" (ver. 6). Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. The mode of receiving the gospel is the same to all. It is apprehended by the understanding, approved by the judgment, and embraced by the affections. It is not enough that it falls on the ear like the strain of a seraphic melody, not enough that it enters the understanding as a clearly conceived, full-orbed truth, not enough that it ripples through the sphere of the emotions as an unspeakable ecstasy, unless, aided by the divine Spirit, it be cordially embraced by the heart and conscience as the whole truth—the only truth that saves and regenerates. It is in the gospel only that we "hear of the grace of God"—the good news that He has provided redemption and restoration for the race. Nature, with all her revelations of beauty, wisdom, and power, is dumb on this subject. Providence, with its vast repertory of mingled mystery and bounty, unfolds it not. It is only by believing the gospel that, like the Colossians, we can "know the grace of God in truth."

IV. **The true gospel is universally the same in the method of its propagation.**—1. *It is propagated by preaching.* "As ye also learned" (ver. 7)—more correctly, "Even as ye were instructed" in the truth mentioned in the preceding verse. It is believed Epaphras first preached the gospel at Colossæ, and, under the direction of Paul, he was probably also evangelist to the neighbouring cities of Hierapolis and Laodicea. Preaching is the divinely instituted means of disseminating the gospel. It cannot be superseded by any other agency. Its success has been marvellous.

2. *It is propagated by men thoroughly qualified for the work.*—(1) *The apostle recognised Epaphras as a co-labourer with himself.* "Our dear fellow-servant" (ver. 7). The preacher must labour as belonging to Christ, as entirely dependent on Him, and as deeply attached to Him. He is not a servant *of* the Church; he is a servant *for* the Church, in doctrine, supplication to God, and varied endeavours among men. With all frankness, affection, and modesty, the great apostle acknowledges Epaphras as "a dear fellow-labourer." Envy and jealousy of the gifts and reputation of others are pernicious and unjustifiable. (2) *The apostle recognised Epaphras as a faithful minister of Christ.* It was a great honour to be a fellow-servant with Paul, but greater still to be a minister of Christ, the Lord of glory, the Head of the Church, the Monarch of men and angels; commissioned by Him to proclaim the most vital truths and promote the best

interests of the people. Moreover, he is called a *faithful* minister: the appellation of minister he had in common with many others; the praise of faithfulness is confined to few. "The great secret lies in these three things—Christ, immortal souls, self-humiliation" (*Bishop Wilson*). (3) *The apostle recognised Epaphras as a man of deep spiritual insight.* "Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit" (ver. 8). Love is the leading characteristic of the gospel. It is announced as a message of God's love to man, and its object is to produce love in every believing heart. Epaphras apprehended this prominent feature in the message itself, discerned its origin in the work of the Spirit, and rejoiced in declaring its exercise towards the apostle, towards God, and towards all men.

Lessons.—1. *The universality of the gospel a strong evidence of its divine authorship.* 2. *Though all the world were to reject the gospel it would still be true.* 3. *To whomsoever the gospel comes the imperative duty is to believe it.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 6. *The Gospel manifests Itself.*

I. **It spreads its good news in all possible places.**—"Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world."

II. **Produces unmistakable spiritual results.**—"And bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you."

III. **Is a revelation of divine grace.**—"The grace of God in truth."

IV. **To be an evident blessing it must be heard and thoroughly believed as the only truth.**—"Since the day ye heard of and knew."

Vers. 7, 8. *A Successful Preacher—*

I. **Is affectionately recognised as a faithful minister of Christ** (ver. 7).

II. **Attributes his success to the work of the Spirit** (ver. 8).

III. **Regards the exercise of love in his hearers as a prominent feature of success** (ver. 8).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9—11.

A Comprehensive Apostolic Prayer.

I. **It was a prayer expressive of deep spiritual interest.**—1. *It was suggested by the report of their active Christian virtues.* "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray" (ver. 9). They had believed in Christ, they had shown a genuine love to the brethren, they hoped for the glory of the future, they brought forth the fruits of the Spirit. All this excites the grateful heart of the apostle to pray that they may enjoy yet higher spiritual blessings, may increase in knowledge and wisdom, and rise to the highest standard of moral perfection. We best show our love to others by praying for them. Prayer is always needed, since the most excellent Christian graces are imperfect, liable to decay, and may be abused.

2. *It was constant and fervent.*—"Do not cease to pray for you and to desire" (ver. 9). The apostle had unbounded faith in the efficacy of prayer. Many in these days limit the advantage of prayer to its reflex influence on the individual who prays—expanding the thoughts, spiritualising the mind, and sanctifying the heart; and maintain that it is powerless to affect God, whose purposes must advance by the irresistible operation of unchanging law, irrespective of human supplication. Above this partial philosophy of the modern scientist we have the authority and practice of an inspired apostle. If God did not hear and answer prayer—answer it, not in violation of, but in harmony with, the highest law—then the frequent intercessions of the apostle are reduced to a solemn mockery, are unjustifiable and inexplicable. The apostle prayed with the utmost assiduity—night and day, as opportunity permitted—and with the utmost ardency, desiring

that the blessings sought might be liberally and at once bestowed. As Augustine puts it, our desires being prayers, these are continual when our desires are continual.

II. **It was a prayer for amplest knowledge.**—1. *The main subject of the knowledge desired.* "The knowledge of His will" (ver. 9). Man thirsts for knowledge. He is eager to become acquainted with himself and the wonders around him. In his unwearied search after knowledge he has conquered colossal difficulties; has penetrated the starry spaces with the telescope; revealed the smallest visual atom with the microscope; and, with the deep-sea dredge, has made us familiar with the long-hidden treasures of the ocean. But the highest knowledge is the knowledge of God—not simply of His nature, majesty, perfections, works, but the knowledge of His *will*. So far as we are concerned, that will comprehends all that God wishes us to be, believe, and do. We must know His will in order to salvation, and as the supreme rule and guide of every action. Man may be ignorant of many things; but he cannot be ignorant of God's will and be saved. The knowledge of that will is the first great urgent duty of life.

2. *The measure in which the knowledge may be possessed.*—"Filled with knowledge." The word "knowledge" is full and emphatic, indicating a living, comprehensive, complete knowledge of the divine will. They already possessed some knowledge of that will; and the apostle prays that it may be deeper, clearer, and increasingly potent within them, that they may *be filled*. The soul is not only to possess this knowledge, but it is to possess the soul—informing, animating, and impelling it onwards to higher attainments in the things of God. Knowledge is a power for good only as it acquaints with the divine will, and as it pervades and actuates the whole spiritual being. We may seek great things from God. He gives largely, according to His infinite bounty. There is no limit to our increase in divine knowledge but our own capacity, diligence, and faith.

3. *The practical form in which the knowledge should be exercised.*—"In all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (ver. 9). The word "spiritual" applies to both wisdom and understanding. The false teachers offered a *wisdom* which they highly extolled, but it had only a show of wisdom; it was an empty counterfeit, calling itself philosophy; the offspring of vanity, nurtured by the flesh; it was unspiritual. The true gospel is spiritual in its origin, characteristics, and effects. The wisdom and understanding it imparts are the work of the Holy Spirit. Without His presence and operation in the soul both the knowledge of the divine will and advancement in it would be impossible. The two terms are similar in meaning, but there is a distinction. *Wisdom* refers to the God-given organ by which truth is selected and stored up; *understanding* to the faculty by which truth is practically and prudently used: the one is comprehensive and accumulative, the other discriminative and practical. True spiritual insight is the work of the Holy Spirit. No amount of mental or moral culture, of human wisdom and sagacity, can supply it. This was the power lacked by the Galatians when they were so soon seduced from the gospel; and to prevent a similar result among the Colossians the apostle prays they may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in *all* spiritual wisdom and understanding, that they may discern between the false and the true, the carnal and spiritual, the human and the divine.

III. **It was a prayer for the loftiest Christian career.**—1. *The standard of Christian conduct.* "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord" (ver. 10). Life is a journey; death is the common goal and resting-place where all meet. Our conduct is the pathway on which we travel. The *walk* therefore describes the general course of life, the actions, habits, and deportment of the man in his relations to God and to the race. This walk is to "be worthy of the Lord"

—worthy of His holy and dignified character; worthy of His law, of His kingdom, of His glory, of the high destiny He has designed for us. When a certain prince, on being captured, was asked how he should be treated, his prompt reply was, "As a king." We should ever remember the high vocation wherewith we are called, and the exalted pattern after which our behaviour should be modelled (Eph. iv. 1; 1 Thess. ii. 12). Our life is to be worthy of the Lord—in its spirit, motive, active outgoing, development, scope, and aim. For this purpose we are filled with the knowledge of His will. The end of knowledge is practice; its value consists in what it enables us to do. He is not an architect who simply theorises about buildings, but he who has the art to erect them. To speak eloquently of war does not constitute a general; he only deserves that distinction who can skilfully manage an army in the field, whether in attacking or defending.

2. *The rule by which that standard is maintained.*—"Unto all pleasing" (ver. 10). We are to please the Lord in all things; to attempt and sanction nothing that will not be acceptable to Him. We are not to please ourselves—we are not to please others—as the ultimate object of life. If our conduct please others—our parents, our friends, our country—it is well; but though all others are displeased and estranged, we must strive in all things to please God. This is the simplest as well as the highest and grandest rule of life. Attention to this will settle many perplexing questions concerning human duty. The will of God must be studied as our supreme rule, and to it all our thoughts, words, and actions must be conformed. Thus the life on earth becomes a preparation and discipline for heaven, and blends the present with a future of immortal blessedness. It is well with us when we obey the Lord (Jer. xlii. 6).

3. *The productiveness of Christian consistency.*—"Being fruitful in every good work" (ver. 10). One result of a worthy walk is fertility in Christian activity. In order to fruitfulness there must be life. The believer's life is hid with Christ in God, and the existence of the hidden life is manifest in the fruits. Fruitfulness also involves culture. Neglect the vine, and instead of the pendent clusters of glossy, luscious fruit there will be barrenness and decay—withered branches fit only for the consuming fire. God disciplines His people for fruitful and abundant service by painful but loving exercises of His providence (John xv. 2). It is not enough to bear one kind of fruit; there must be fertility "in every good work." The Christian is in sympathy with every good enterprise that aims at the physical, social, or moral welfare of man, and will heartily contribute his influence and effort in its promotion.

4. *Progress in divine knowledge.*—"And increasing in the knowledge of God" (ver. 10). The knowledge of God is the real instrument of enlargement, in soul and life, of the believer (*Alford*). We can reach no stage in Christian experience and practice in which additional knowledge is unnecessary. Activity in goodness sharpens the knowing faculty and adds to the stores of wisdom. On the other hand, increased knowledge reacts and stimulates the worker (John vii. 17; Matt. xxv. 29). *Divine* knowledge is the great necessity of the soul, and the real means of fruitfulness and growth in goodness. It appeals to, elevates, and expands the whole man.

IV. **It was a prayer for supernatural strength.**—1. *The appropriateness and fulness of the blessing desired.* "Strengthened with all might" (ver. 11). Man is morally weak. Sin has enfeebled and debased the soul; it has tyrannised over humanity for ages. "When we were yet without strength" Christ came and introduced another force which counteracts sin and will ultimately effect its overthrow. All who believe in Christ receive strength to struggle against and conquer sin. This imparted strength is especially necessary in realising the blessings for which the apostle prays—complete knowledge of the divine will; a life worthy of the

Lord; spiritual fertility and advancement in heavenly wisdom. "Strengthened with *all* might." Our enemies are numerous, violent, and obstinate, and our infirmities are many. We therefore need strength of every kind. As it is necessary to overcome *all* our enemies, so it is necessary to be endued with *all* might—might to endure the most furious assault, might to resist the most bewitching solicitation to evil.

2. *The supernatural source of the blessing.*—"According to His glorious power" (ver. 11)—or, more correctly, "according to the power of His glory." Moral power is not native to the Christian; it has its source in God. He imparts it to the believing heart. The motive and measure of our strength is in the might of His glory. Power is an essential attribute of the divine glory; it is manifested in the splendid works of creation, in the inscrutable ways of providence, and pre-eminently in the marvels of human redemption. God's revelation of Himself to us, in whatever form, is the one source of our highest strength. The power of His glory reveals itself more and more to him who walks worthy of the Lord. Armed with this supernatural energy, the weakest saint becomes invincible.

3. *The great practical purpose contemplated by the blessing.*—"Unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness" (ver. 11). *Patience* is the temper which does not easily succumb under trial; *longsuffering*, or longmindedness, is the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate a wrong. Patience respects the weight of the affliction, longsuffering its duration. The former is exercised in relation to God, in the endurance of trial, or in waiting for promised blessing; the latter in relation to man, in long-continued forbearance under irritating wrongs. The true strength of the believer consists, not so much in what he can do, as in what he can endure (Isa. xxx. 15). The quiet, uncomplaining sufferer is greater than the most vigorous athlete. The characteristic of both patience and long-suffering is expressed in the phrase "*with joyfulness.*" To suffer with joyfulness is the great distinction and triumph of the Christian spirit. The endurance of the Stoic was often the effect of pride or insensibility. But the Christian, though keenly sensitive to pain, is enabled by the Holy Spirit to rejoice in the assurance of God's presence, in the certain victory of his cause, and in the prospect of reward both here and hereafter.

Lessons.—1. *How sublime are the topics of genuine prayer.* 2. *Deep experimental acquaintance with the things of God is essential to a lofty and useful career.* 3. *Knowledge, wisdom, spiritual fertility, and strength are the gifts of God.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 9-11. *Paul's Prayer for the Colossians—*

I. **For knowledge.**—Fulness of knowledge both extensively and intensively is the burden of his desire. "In all wisdom"—as a practical guide, not as mere theory. "And spiritual understanding"—the spirit of the believer receiving the Spirit of God to lead him inwardly to understand, realise, and delight in the divine will.

II. **For fruitfulness.**—1. *A life worthy of the Christian as it is well pleasing unto his Lord.* 2. *Good works of every kind.* 3. *Substantial growth.*

III. **For strength.**—In order to this fruitfulness all might is required of body, mind, and spirit, but especially that of the Spirit within. The measure—"according to His glorious power"; so as to suffer patiently the constant trials of the Christian life, and exercise all longsuffering towards persecutors and enemies of the truth, and this with *joyfulness.* It is not what we can do, but what He can do in us, and we through Him.—*Preacher's Magazine.*

Ver. 11. *Divine Strength—*

I. **Is spiritual strength, the source and sustenance of all might.**

II. **May be realised in increasing measure.**

III. **Arms the soul with invincible power.**—Power to endure with patience the trials of life; power to bear with the opposition and cruelty of others.

IV. **Enables the soul to rejoice in the midst of suffering.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 12.

Meetness for the Saintly Inheritance.

The epistle has been hitherto occupied with prefatory observations. In this verse the writer enters upon his principal theme relating to the person and redemption of Jesus Christ. He offers *thanks to God the Father as the primal source of that grace which constitutes the meetness for the saintly heritage.* Observe:—

I. **The opulent inheritance provided for the good.**—1. *It is a present and prospective possession.* "The inheritance of the saints in light." *Light* is symbolic of knowledge, purity, and joy. The saints even now are called out of darkness into God's kingdom of marvellous light. "They walk in the light as He is in the light." They have a measure of knowledge, but it is dimmed by many earthly obscurities; of purity, but it is surrounded with imperfections; of joy, but it is moderated by life's sorrows. In the prospective heavenly inheritance, of which the earthly portion is a preparation and pledge, knowledge shall be unclouded and complete, purity unsullied, joy uninterrupted. "The life for eternity is *already* begun: we are at and from the very hour of our regeneration introduced into the spiritual world—a world which, though mysterious and invisible, is as real as the world of sense around us: the Christian's life of heavenliness is the first stage of heaven itself! There is a power now within the believer in the germ, of which his celestial immortality shall be the proper fruit. The dawn of heaven hath already begun in all who are yet to rejoice in its noontide glory" (*Archer Butler*).

2. *It is a possession provided for the good.*—"The saints." Not for the unholy, the impenitent, the unbelieving, the worldly. It is an inheritance where only the pure in heart can dwell. There is a world of significance in that pithy saying of an old divine: "Every one will get to heaven who could live there." Only the saints who have made the Lord their light and their salvation can bear the splendour of His presence.

3. *It is a possession freely given.*—The legal heir has no need to work for his inheritance; he enters in possession by right of succession or testatorial bequest. The saint enters upon his inheritance of righteousness, not by natural descent or by any self-constituted right, but on the ground of a free, divine gift. The believer has a *title* to the inheritance; but it is not earned by his own efforts: it is bestowed by Christ who won the inheritance by suffering and dying. Thus all idea of merit is excluded; we can do nothing to deserve such a heritage of blessing. The word "inheritance" really means "the parcel of the lot"—an expression borrowed from the Old Testament (Ps. xvi. 5). The promised Canaan suggests an analogy between it and the higher hopes and wealthier possessions of the new dispensation. As each Israelite, through the grace of God, obtained his allotment, so the Christian obtains his portion in the kingdom of God. The present and future possession of the saints infinitely surpasses the earthly inheritance.

II. **The special meetness necessary to a participation in the inheritance.**—"Hath made us meet to be partakers."

1. *This meetness is absolutely necessary.*—Naturally we are unmeet. A monarch may raise the basest slave to a dukedom, but he cannot give him fitness to discharge the duties of the exalted position; he may change his state, but he

cannot change his nature. To obtain a moral fitness for the saintly inheritance our nature must be changed. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

2. *This meetness consists in the loving conformity of the human will to the divine.*—The future life of heaven is the object and pattern of our present heavenly life: "there is the mighty model on which we are to reconstruct our nature; there dwells that central form of moral and spiritual beauty of which our life is to be the transcript." The celestial spirits find their highest glory and blessedness in the complete submission of their whole nature to God; in cheerful, willing, loving obedience to His will. The heavenly life is the test and standard of our life on earth—of every motive, word, and deed. The Church of Christ is a training-school for a more exalted career. An ancient sage once said, "Boys ought most to learn what most they shall need when they become men." So men ought to learn in this life what they shall need most as glorified beings in the future. Only as our whole soul is conformed in loving obedience to the will of God are we "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." We are thus brought into sympathy with the good in all realms, and fitted to participate in the most exalted fellowships of the future!

3. *This meetness is a divine work.*—It is God "the Father who hath made us meet." He provides the inheritance; He gives the title to it; He confers the moral fitness by which the soul enters into its possession and enjoyment. None but God, the fountain of holiness, goodness, and power, could accomplish this work. "He worketh in us to will and to do." In the meetening process He hath dealt with us as a FATHER, instructing our ignorance, correcting and chastising our faults, and comforting and strengthening us in trouble.

III. **The great duty we owe to the generous donor of the inheritance.**—"Giving thanks." Gratitude is the easiest and commonest duty of a dependent creature; yet is the duty most frequently and grossly neglected. Our hearts should ever glow with an unquenchable flame of grateful praise to the bountiful Author of all our blessings.

Lessons.—1. *We owe thanks to God as the Provider of the inheritance.* 2. *We owe thanks to God as the active Agent in producing the special meetness to participate in the enjoyments of the inheritance.* 3. *Our thanks to God should be expressed in active obedience to His will.* 4. *Our thanks to God should be joyful, fervent, and constant.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSE.

Ver. 12. *Qualification for Heaven.*

I. **The state contemplated.**—It is "an inheritance"; not a purchased property, but the common heritage of the children of God. "Of the saints," holy persons. "In light," knowledge, holiness, happiness.

II. **The meetness required.**—Adaptations in the natural world. In social arrangement. In regard to the heavenly state. A change of heart is necessary. Without it heaven would not be heaven to us. It must be sought and obtained in the present world. It is here ascribed to the Father.

III. **The thanks to be rendered.**—We thank our fellow-men for their gifts. We thank God for His other gifts. We should thank Him for meetness for heaven. This thanksgiving prepares us for heaven.—*G. Brooks.*

Meetness for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.—Life for eternity is already begun. The business and the beatitude of heaven must consist in conformity of the will to the will of God: this is equally the law of earth.

I. **Faith is the realising power of this meetness.**

II. **Hope is the consoling and fortifying power.**

III. **Love is the uniting power, the consummation, and the perfection of all.**—*A. Butler.*

The Inheritance of the Saints.

I. **An interesting view of the future world as it is inherited by believers.**—1. *The saints are in light in respect to the place.* 2. *As it respects purity.* 3. *In respect of the permanency of their felicity.* 4. *As it respects knowledge.*

II. **The meetness which is wrought by God in the hearts of all who are raised to the enjoyment of this inheritance.**—1. *The relative meetness is expressed by the word inheritance.* It is assigned to heirs. 2. *The personal meetness is indicated by the term saints.*

Lessons.—1. *Give thanks to God for those who are made meet.* 2. *Give thanks to God if the work be begun in yourselves.*—*R. Watson.*

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

The Great Moral Translation.

These words amplify the truth unfolded in the preceding verse, and describe the great change that must take place in order to obtain a meetness for the saintly inheritance—*the translation of the soul from the powerful dominion of darkness into the glorious kingdom of the Son of God.*

I. **This translation involves our enfranchisement from a state of dark captivity.**—"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness" (ver. 13).

1. *The unrenewed are in a realm of moral darkness.*—This was the condition of the Colossians and of the whole Gentile world before the times of the gospel. "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." Darkness denotes *ignorance*, moral blindness. Man is in darkness about the great mysteries of being, the mystery of sin and suffering, the deep significance of life, the distressing question of human duty, the destiny of the universe, the character and operations of God, and His relation to the race. It is possible to know much *about* religion, to hold religious ideas at second-hand as a group of poetic conceptions—fancy pictures from the book of Revelation, like the pictures of the poets from the book of Nature—and yet be totally in the dark as to the religious experience of those ideas. May be intellectually light, and spiritually dark. Darkness denotes *danger* and *misery*. Like a traveller in a strange country overtaken by the night, stumbling along in uncertainty and fear, until one fatal step—and he lies helpless in the rocky abyss, into the bottom of which he falls.

2. *In this realm of moral darkness the unrenewed are held in captivity.*—They are slaves in the land of darkness, tyrannised over by an arbitrary and capricious ruler. Slavery distorts and defaces the illustrious image in which man was originally created, darkens the understanding, paralyses the intellect, and stunts the growth of intelligence; it robs him of his self-respect, poisons his sense of rectitude and honour, blunts his sensibilities, imbrutes his entire nature, and brands him with unutterable infamy. The "power of darkness" is that tyranny which sin exercises over its captives, filling their minds with deadly errors or brutish ignorance, their consciences with terror or indifference, and dragging them onwards under its dismal yoke into all the horrors of eternal darkness. The tyrant of this gloomy realm is Satan; and his domination is founded and conducted on imposture, error, ignorance, and cruelty. He is the arch-deceiver.

3. *From this realm of moral darkness God graciously liberates.*—"Who hath delivered us." For the slaves of sin there is no help but in God. It is the nature of sin to incapacitate its victim for making efforts after self-enfranchisement. He is unwilling to be free. To snap the fetters from a nation of slaves yearning for liberty is a great and noble act. Our deliverance is mightier than that. The word "deliver" in the text means to snatch or rescue from danger,

even though the person seized may at first be unwilling to escape, as Lot from Sodom. God does not force the human will. The method of deliverance was devised and executed independent of our will; its personal benefits cannot be enjoyed without our will.

II. **This translation places us in a condition of highest moral freedom and privilege.**—1. *We are transferred to a kingdom.* "Hath translated us into the kingdom" (ver. 13). *Power* detains captives; a kingdom fosters willing citizens. Tyranny has no law but the capricious will of a despot; a kingdom implies good government, based on universally recognised and authoritative law. "The image is presented of the wholesale transportation of a conquered people, of which the history of Oriental monarchies furnishes many examples" (Josephus, *Ant.*, IX. xi.). They were translated from a bad to a better ruling power. So the believer is moved from the realm and power of darkness and bondage to the kingdom of light and freedom. The laws of this kingdom are prescribed by Christ, its honours and privileges granted by Him, and its future history and triumphs will ever be identified with His own transcendent glory.

2. *We are placed under the rule of a beneficent and glorious King.*—"The kingdom of God's dear Son," more accurately "the Son of His love." As love is the essence of the Father, so is it also of the Son. The manifestation of the Son to the world is a manifestation by Him of divine love (1 John iv. 9). The kingdom into which believers are translated is founded on love; its entire government is carried on under the same beneficent principle. The acts of suffering and death, by which Christ won His kingly dignity and power, were revelations of love in its most heroic and self-sacrificing forms. When we believe in Christ, we are translated from the tyranny and darkness of sin into the kingdom of which the Son of God—the Son infinitely beloved of the Father—is King. As willing subjects we share with Him the Father's love, and are being prepared for more exalted service and sublimer experiences in the endless kingdom of the future.

III. **The divine method by which the translation is effected.**—It is effected by redemption.

1. *The means of redemption.*—"Through His blood" (ver. 14). The image of a captive and enslaved people is still continued. But the metaphor is changed from the victor who rescues the captive by force of arms to the philanthropist who releases him by the payment of a ransom (*Lightfoot*). All men are under the condemnation of a violated law, and sink in the bondage of sin. There is no release but by paying a ransom; this is involved in the idea of redemption. The ransom-price paid for the enfranchisement of enslaved humanity was "not corruptible things, as silver and gold, but the precious blood of Christ." The *mode* of redemption is to us a deep mystery; the reasons influencing the divine Mind in its adoption we cannot fathom. But the fact is plainly revealed (1 Pet. iii. 18, ii. 24; Gal. iii. 13). This was God's method of translating from bondage to liberty.

2. *The effect of redemption.*—"Even the forgiveness of sins" (ver. 14). The ransom-price is paid, and the slave is free. The first blessing of redemption is pardon. It is this the penitent soul most urgently needs; it does not exclude all other redemptive blessings, but opens and prepares the soul for their reception. Sin is the great obstacle between the soul and God; the monster sluice that shuts off the flow of divine blessing. Redemption lifts the sluice, and the stream of divine goodness pours its tide of benediction into the enraptured soul. An earthly king may forgive the felon, but he cannot give him a better disposition. God never forgives without at the same time giving a new heart. Pardon involves every other blessing—peace, purity, glory; it is the pledge and foundation for the bestowal of all we can need in time or in eternity.

3. *The Author of redemption.*—"In whom we have redemption" (ver. 14). Christ, the Son of God's love, by the sacrifice of Himself, accomplished our redemption; and it is only as we are *in* Him by faith that we actually partake of the freedom He purchased for us. His blood is not merely the ransom paid for our deliverance, but He is Himself the personal, living source of redemption. The deliverance of humanity is not simply in the work of Christ, through what He did and suffered, but in Himself—"the strong Son of God," the crucified, risen, and living Saviour. It is not only a rescue from condemnation and punishment, but a deliverance from the power and bondage of evil. The words "in whom we have redemption" teach much and imply more. They describe a continuous gift enjoyed, a continuous process realised by all who have been translated into the kingdom of the Saviour. In them the power of redemption is being carried on, so that they die unto sin, and live unto God, and experience a growing meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light (*Spence*). Christ only could be the Redeemer of men; He combined in one person the divine and human natures: He could therefore meet the demands of God and the necessities of man.

Lessons.—1. *Sin is a dark, enslaving power.* 2. *The kingdom of the Redeemer is one of light and freedom.* 3. *Moral translation by redemption is a divine work.* 4. *The forgiveness of sin can be obtained only by faith in the Son of God.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 13. *From Darkness to Light.*

I. **Man is naturally in a state of darkness, held captive by sin and Satan.**

II. **A kingdom of freedom and light is provided by the intervention of the Son of God.**

III. **The translation from darkness to light is a divine act.**

Ver. 14. *The Great Blessing of Redemption—*

I. **Is the forgiveness of sins.**

II. **The blessing of forgiveness is through the agency of Christ.**

III. **Redemption is purchased at a great cost and sacrifice.**—"Through His blood."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 15—17.

The Relation of Christ to God and to all Greated Things.

Having spoken of our redemption, the apostle, in terms of the highest significance and grandeur, dwells upon the dignity and absolute supremacy of the Redeemer.

I. **The relation of Christ to God.**—"Who is the image of the invisible God" (ver. 15). God is an infinite and eternal Spirit, incomprehensible and invisible. "No man hath seen God at any time;" yet humanity yearns for some visible embodiment of Deity. Christ reflects and reveals the Father. "He is the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person." It is believed that the idea of the *Logos* underlies the whole of this passage, though the term is not mentioned. The heretical teachers at Colossæ had introduced a perverted view as to the nature of the *mediation* between God and creation, and the apostle aims to rectify it. The word λόγος, denoting both reason and speech, was a philosophical term adopted by Alexandrian Judaism to express the manifestation of the unseen God—the absolute Being—in the creation and government of the world. It included all modes by which God makes Himself known to man. As His *reason*, it denoted His purpose or design; as His *speech*, it implied His revelation. When Christian teachers adopted this term, they exalted and fixed its meaning by attaching to it two precise and definite ideas—that the Word is a divine person,

and that the Word became incarnate in Jesus Christ (*Lightfoot*). Christ as the eternal Word is the perfect image, the visible representation, of the unseen God. In addition to the idea of *similitude*, which is capable of a wide and general use, the word "image" involves two others.

1. *Representation.*—It implies an archetype of which the image is a copy. Man is said to be in the image of God; but there is a difference between the image of God in man and the image of God in Christ. In Christ it is as Cæsar's image in his son; in man it is as Cæsar's image on his coin. In the God-man Christ Jesus we have a visible, living, perfect, and reliable representation of the invisible God.

2. *Manifestation.*—The general idea of the *Logos* is the manifestation of the hidden. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John i. 18, compared with xiv. 9, 10, vi. 46). The incarnate Word, in His nature, attributes, and actions, is the true *epiphany* of the unseen Deity, setting forth, like distinct rays of one and the same glorious light, His infinite wisdom, mercy, righteousness, and power. Our obligations to Christ for His wondrous revelations are unspeakably great.

II. **The relation of Christ to all created things.**—1. *Christ existed prior to the creation.* He is "the firstborn of every creature" (ver. 15). It is not said He was the first formed or first created of every creature, but the firstborn—the first begotten. It is plainly intimated that Christ, the Son of God's love, was begotten before any created thing existed. There is therefore no ground in this passage for the Arians and Socinians to build up their theory of the creatureship of Christ. In relation to all created things, intelligent or unintelligent, terrene or celestial, Christ was the firstborn. In an ineffably mysterious sense *He* was begotten; *they* were created. The two ideas involved in the phrase are: (1) *Priority to all creation*—the absolute pre-existence of the Son. The term "first begotten" was frequently used among the Jews as a term of precedence and dignity. As applied to the Son of God, it implies priority in rank in relation to all created things. Time is an accident of the *creature*. Therefore the origin of the Son of God precedes all time. (2) *Sovereignty over all creation.* God's firstborn is the natural Ruler, the acknowledged Head of God's household. He is "Heir of all things." He is creation's supreme and absolute Lord. He brought all creatures out of nothing, and by His own will graduated the degree of being each should possess; and it is fitting He should have unlimited empire over all. As if to prevent the possibility of any misconception regarding the relation of Christ to the universe, and to show that He could not be a part of creation however exalted in degree, but was essentially distinct from it, the apostle *sets forth the Son of God as the first cause, the active agent, and the grand end of all created things.*

2. *Christ is Himself the Creator of all things.*—(1) *The conception of creation originated in Christ.* "For by Him [or *in* Him] were all things created" (ver. 16). He was the great first cause; the being, forms, limitations, energies of all things to be were bound up in Him. It rested with Himself to create or not to create. It is thought by some the Platonic idea is here shadowed forth; that the archetypes, the original patterns of all things, were in Christ before they were created outwardly. This is simply a philosophic speculation, and is readily suggested by the universal method of the mind first forming a mental conception within itself of any object it desires to body-forth to the outward eye. It is in Christ we trace the great work of creation in its beginning, progress, and end. (2) *The powers of creation were distributed by Christ.* "All things that are in heaven, and that are in earth" (ver. 16). He created the heavens also; but those things which are in the heavens are rather named because the inhabitants are more

noble than their dwellings. "Visible," things that are evident to the outward senses; and "invisible," things that may be conceived by the understanding. "With a view to meet some peculiar doctrine of the false teachers at Colossæ, who seem to have alleged that Christ was but one of the heavenly powers, St. Paul breaks up the things *invisible*, and distributes them by the words "thrones," "dominions," "principalities," or "powers." It may be difficult, and indeed impossible, for us now fully to know what the terms severally convey in connection with the several hierarchies of heaven; they seem to point to gradations of being and to distinctions of official glory. Yet all these invisible beings, so illustrious as to be seated on *thrones*, so great as to be styled *dominions*, so elevated as to be considered *principalities*, so mighty as to merit the designation of *powers*, were created by the Son of God; and they all acknowledge His supremacy and glory. The highest position in creation is infinitely below Him, and there is neither majesty nor renown that equals His. All created beings occupying the loftiest thrones throughout the vastness of immensity and amidst the mystery of life do homage and service to Christ Jesus as the firstborn, the only begotten Son of God" (*Spence*). (3) *Christ is Himself the great end of creation.* "All things were created *for* Him" (ver. 16). As all creation emanated from Him, so does it all converge again towards Him. "The eternal Word is the goal of the universe, as He was the starting-point. It must end in unity, as it proceeded from unity; and the centre of this unity is Christ." The most elaborate and majestic machinery of the universe and the most highly gifted intelligence alike exist only to serve the ultimate purpose of creation's Lord. All created things gather their significance, dignity, and glory by their connection with Him. Christ must be more than a creature, as the loftiest creature could not be the end of all created things. [It is a narrow philosophy that teaches that all things were made for man.] The grand end of all our endeavours should ever be the glory of Christ.

3. *The unchanging eternity of Christ.*—"He is before all things" (ver. 17). Not only is He before Moses and before Abraham, as He declared to the Jews (John viii.), but He is before all things. The words refer not so much to His eminence in rank as to duration. The terms HE IS, in the Greek, are most emphatic, the one declaring His *personality*, the other that His *pre-existence is absolute existence.* Christ existed before any created thing—even before time itself; therefore, from eternity. Knowing the tendency of men to entertain inferior notions of the person of Christ, and of the redemption He has provided, the apostle multiplies conceptions to represent His divine worth and excellency. He should be preferred before all.

4. *The continued existence of creation depends on Christ.*—"And by [rather *in*] Him all things consist" (ver. 17)—*hold together, cohere.* He is the principle of cohesion in the universe. He impresses upon creation that unity and solidarity which makes it a cosmos instead of a chaos. Thus, to take one instance, the action of gravitation, which keeps in their places things fixed and regulates the motion of things moving, is an expression of His mind (*Lightfoot*). The universe found its completion in Him, and is sustained and preserved every moment by the continuous exercise of His almighty power. All things hang on Christ; in Him they live and move and have their being. If He withdrew His upholding hand, everything would run into confusion and ruin. "Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled: Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust." In Him all things consist. He is the centre of life, force, motion, and rest; round Him all things revolve. He imposes their limits, gives to them their law, strikes the keynote of their harmonies, blends and controls their diverse operations. He is the All-perfect in the midst of imperfection, the Unchanged in the midst of change. He is the Author of human redemption;

became incarnate, suffered, died, and rose again, and now reigns with the Father in glory everlasting. He is worthy of our loftiest adoration, our humblest submission, our strongest confidence, our most ardent love.

Lessons.—1. *The supremacy of the Creator and Preserver of all things is absolute and universal.*—2. *Human redemption is grounded on the divinity of the Son of God.* 3. *Personal trust in the Redeemer brings the soul into direct personal relation to the Father.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 15. *Christ a Revelation because He is the Equal of the Father*—

I. **In His nature.**—The incarnation.

II. **In His attributes.**

III. **In His will.**—The character of Christ and His moral system.

IV. **In His works.**—His miracles, His death as a sacrifice for sin, His resurrection. 1. How ungrateful and unbelieving have we been! 2. How zealous and devoted should we be!—*G. Brooks.*

Ver. 16. *Christ the Author and the End of Creation.*

I. **The Author.**—1. *The extent.* "All things." The universe, natural and moral.

2. *The variety.*—"Visible and invisible." The near and the distant, the vast and the minute, the material and the spiritual.

3. *The orders.*—"Whether they be." Scale of being. Gradations in all classes.

II. **The end.**—1. *Heaven was created for Him.* As the place of His special residence and as the home of His people.

2. *Angels were created for Him.*—Messengers of His mercy, executioners of His vengeance.

3. *Hell was created for Him.*—The prison of His justice.

4. *The earth was created for Him.*—The scene of His incarnation and atoning death. His mediatorial kingdom.

5. *The human race was created for Him.* — Man created, preserved, redeemed. (1) How exalted should be our ideas of Christ! (2) How carefully should we learn to view everything in connection with Christ! 3. What ground for confidence, gratitude, and fear!—*Ibid.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 18.

The Relation of Christ to the Moral Creation.

After showing that Christ holds the position of absolute priority and sovereignty over the whole universe, the apostle now proceeds to point out His relation to the principal part of that whole—the Church, as the symbol and embodiment of the new, moral creation. From this verse we learn that *Christ is the supreme Head, and primal life-giving Source of the Church, and as such is invested with universal pre-eminence.*

I. **Christ is the supreme Head of the Church—the new moral creation.**—1. *The Church is the body of Christ.* "The body, the Church." Much controversy has prevailed as to what constitutes the Church; and the more worldly the Church became, the more confused the definition, the more bitter the controversy. The New Testament idea of the Church is easily comprehended. It is the whole body of the faithful in Christ Jesus, who are redeemed and regenerated by His grace—the aggregate multitude of those in heaven and on earth who love, adore, and serve the Son of God as their Redeemer and Lord. The word ἐκκλησία contains two leading ideas: the ordained *unity*, and the *calling* or separating out from the world. Three grand features ever distinguish the true

Church—unbroken unity, essential purity, and genuine catholicity. (Cf. Eph. i. 22, 23, iv. 15, 16; 1 Cor. xii. 12-27).

2. *Christ is the Head of the Church.*—"And He is the Head of the body, the Church." That the world might not be considered this body, the word "Church" is added; and the materialistic conception of a Church organism thus refuted. As the Head of the Church—(1) Christ inspires it with spiritual life and activity. (2) He impresses and moulds its character. (3) He prescribes and enforces its laws. (4) He governs and controls its destinies. (5) He is the centre of its unity.

II. **Christ is the originating, fontal Source of the organic life of the Church.**—In respect to the state of grace, *He is the beginning*; in respect to the state of glory, He is *the firstborn from the dead.* He gives to the Church its entity, form, history, and glory; except in and through Him, the Church could have no existence.

1. *He is the Author of the moral creation.*—"The beginning." Christ has been before described as the Author of the old material creation. Here He is announced as the beginning of the new spiritual creation. The moral creation supplies the basis and constituent elements of the Church. In the production, progress, and final triumph of the new creation, He will redress all the wreck and ruin occasioned by the wrong-doing of the old creation. Of this new moral creation Christ is the source, the principle, the beginning; the fountain of life, purity, goodness, and joy to the souls of men.

2. *He is the Author of the moral creation as the Conqueror of Death.*—"The firstborn from the dead." Sin introduced death into the old creation, and the insatiable monster still revels and riots amid the corruptions he perpetually generates. The Son of God, in fulfilment of the divine plan of redemption, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He descended into Hades, and placed Himself among the dead. On the third day He rose again, "the firstfruits of them that slept." He was "the firstborn from the dead"; the first who had risen by His own power; the first who had risen to die no more. By dying He conquered death for Himself and all His followers. He can therefore give life to all that constitute that Church of which He is fittingly the Head, assure them of a resurrection from the dead, of which His own was a pattern and pledge, and of transcendent and unfading glory with Himself in the endless future.

III. **The relation of Christ to the Church invests Him with absolute pre-eminence.**—"That in all things He might have the pre-eminence."

1. *He is pre-eminent in His relation to the Father.*—He is "the image of the invisible God"; the Son of His love, joined by a bond to us mysterious and ineffable, and related in a sense in which no other can be. He is the first and the last; the only divine Son.

2. *He is pre-eminent in the universe of created beings.*—He existed *before* any being was created, and was Himself the omnipotent Author of all created things. The whole hierarchy of heaven obey and adore Him. He is alone in His complex nature as our Emmanuel. Mystery of mysteries; in Him Deity and humanity unite!

3. *He is pre-eminent in His rule over the realm of the dead.*—He entered the gloomy territory of the grave, wrestled with and vanquished the King of Terrors, rose triumphantly from the dismal battle-field, and is now Lord both of the dead and of the living. "I am He that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of Hades and of death" (Rev. i. 18).

4. *He is pre-eminent in His relation to the Church.*—The Church from beginning to end is purely His own creation. He sketched its first rough outline, projected its design, constructed its organism, informed it with life, dowered it

with spiritual riches; and He will continue to watch over and direct its future until He shall "present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing"!

5. *He is pre-eminent in the estimation and homage of a ransomed world.*—He is the central figure of all history; around Him all events group themselves, and by Him are stamped with their true character, significance, and worth. The dream of the ages, the teaching of figures and symbols, the shadows and forecastings of coming events, are all dismissed in the effulgent presence of Him to whom they all point, like so many quivering index-fingers. Christ has to-day the strongest hold upon the heart of humanity. His perplexed enemies admire while they reject Him; the ever-increasing multitude of His friends reverence and adore Him; and the era is rapidly advancing when to Him a universe of worshippers shall bow the knee and acknowledge that "in all things He has the pre-eminence."

Lessons.—1. *The pre-eminence of Christ entitles Him to universal obedience.* 2. *The highest blessedness is found in union with the Church of Christ.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSE.

Ver. 18. *The Church the Body of Christ.*

I. **As the body of Christ the Church is one with Him.**—1. *One in covenant dealing with God.* 2. *One in respect of the principle of life.* 3. *One in history.* 4. *How Christ may be served or persecuted.*

II. **As the body of Christ the Church is one in itself.**—1. *Identity of principle.* 2. *Substantial agreement in faith.* 3. *A visible association through sympathy.*

III. **As the body of Christ the Church has many co-operating and mutually dependent members.**—1. *The members are as numerous as are believers or as are offices.* 2. *Their mutual dependence and co-operation illustrated in the work of spreading the gospel.* 3. *Let each one know his own place and duties.*

IV. **As the body of Christ the Church must grow up to completeness and maturity.**—1. *Each believer is first a babe in Christ, and advances to the measure of the stature of a man in Christ.* 2. *As a whole the Church is gradually augmented and increased*—from Abel onwards. 3. *To gather in and perfect the elect is the peculiar work of time.*

V. **As the body of Christ the Church must be restored to perfect soundness and health.**—1. *Christ receives the Church—dead.* 2. *The first step towards perfect soundness is a resurrection.* 3. *Hence each believer is quickened with Christ in order to be healed.* 4. *The bodies of the saints shall likewise be perfect.*—The Physician. 5. *In heaven no one shall say, "I am sick."*

VI. **As the body of Christ the Church is the object of His unremitting care.**—1. *To provide for the wants of his body is man's unceasing care.* 2. *Christ has made ample provision.* 3. *He now ministers to His Church's wants*—clothing, food, defence, habitation.

VII. **As the body of Christ the Church is the instrument through which He accomplishes His purposes.**—1. *The body the instrument of the heart or soul.* 2. *The Church the instrument of Christ.* 3. *The Church but the instrument.*—*Stewart.*

Christ the Firstborn from the Dead—

I. **In the dignity of His person.**

II. **Because He rose by His own power.**

III. **Because He is the only one who rose never to die again.**

IV. **Because He has taken precedence of His people who all shall rise from their graves to glory.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 19, 20.

The Reconciling Work of the Great Mediator.

After showing the grand pre-eminence of Christ in both the natural and moral creation, and thus declaring the inferior and subordinate position of those angelic powers whose nature and office the false teachers in Colossæ unduly extolled, the apostle here proceeds to point out *the special fitness of the great Mediator for that lofty relationship.* It is grounded on the fact that in Him all fulness dwells. Observe:—

I. **The unique qualification of the great Mediator.**—1. *In Him all fulness dwells.* The heretical teachers would reduce Christ to the level of an angelic mediator, a simple evolution from the divine nature, and one of the links that bind the finite to the infinite. They admitted there was the manifestation of divine power and glory, but that this was only occasional, and not inherent. The apostle, in refuting this, asserts that the plenitude—the grand totality of Deity—resided in Christ, not as a transient guest, but as a permanent and abiding presence. "All fulness." Well might the profound and devout Bengel exclaim, "Who can fathom the depth of this subject?" In the marvellous person of Jesus there is combined all the fulness of humanity as well as the fulness of divinity—all the beauty, dignity, and excellency that replenish heaven and earth, and adorn the nature of God and of men. It is a fulness that stands related to all the interests of the universe, and can supply the moral necessities of all. There is a fulness of wisdom to keep us from error, fulness of grace to preserve from apostasy, fulness of joy to keep us from despair, and fulness of power to protect from all evil. It penetrates and fills the vast universe of intelligent beings, and girds it with a radiant circle of glory and felicity.

2. *It is the good pleasure of the Father that this fulness should reside in the Son.*—"For it pleased the Father" (ver. 19). It was the will and purpose of God the Father that Christ, as the Mediator, should, in order to accomplish the great work of reconciliation, be filled with the plenitude of all divine and human excellencies; that He should be the grand, living, unfailing reservoir of blessing to the whole intelligent universe. The Father is not only in harmony with the reconciling work of the Son, but the whole merciful arrangement was from the first suggested, planned, and appointed by Him. The moving cause and foundation of all saving grace through the Son is the good pleasure of the Father. It is not His good pleasure that any other than Christ should be the Mediator of the universe. We should never seek or acknowledge any other.

II. **The reconciling work of the great Mediator.**—1. *The nature of the reconciliation.* "To reconcile unto Himself" (ver. 20). The word "reconcile" imports to restore one to a state of amity and friendship, to change the relations of two parties separated either by one sided or mutual enmity. Sin places man at enmity with God, and exposes him to the divine opposition and anger. The cross of Christ, by removing the cause of estrangement, opens the way of reconciliation; and the penitent, believing soul is thus restored to the divine favour and friendship. But the word "reconcile" does not always presuppose the existence of open enmity; and, from the general drift of the verse, the term should be interpreted in the most liberal sense, yet with the utmost caution and reverence.

2. *The extent of the reconciliation.*—"To reconcile all things unto Himself, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven" (ver. 20). It was on the earth where the enmities first arose; therefore it is put first. The humanity of Christ bringing all creatures around it unites them to God in a bond which never before existed—a bond which has its origin in the mystery of redemption. Thus

all things in heaven and earth feel the effect of man's renovation. In Christ, the great Reconciler, meet and merge the discordant elements which sin had introduced (see *Bengel* and *Eadie*). The false teachers aimed at effecting a partial reconciliation between God and man, through the interposition of angelic mediators. The apostle speaks of an absolute and complete reconciliation of universal nature to God, effected through the mediation of the incarnate Word. Their mediators were ineffective because they were neither human nor divine. The true Mediator must be both human and divine. The whole universe of things material, as well as spiritual, shall be restored to harmony with God. How far this restoration of universal nature may be subjective, as involved in the changed perceptions of man thus brought into harmony with God, and how far it may have an objective and independent existence, it were vain to speculate (*Lightfoot*). With regard to this reconciliation, we may safely say it includes, with much more that is too high for us to understand, the following truths: (1) Sinful creatures on earth are reconciled to God in Christ. For the degenerate and guilty children of men there is a Reconciler and a way of reconciliation, so that wrath is turned aside and friendship restored. (2) Sinful and sinless or unfallen creatures are reconciled to each other, and brought together again in Christ. Bengel says: "It is certain that the angels, the friends of God, were the enemies of men when they were in a state of hostility against God." The discord and disunion introduced into the moral universe by sin are overcome by the Lord Jesus. (3) Sinless and unfallen creatures are brought nearer to God in Christ, and, through His reconciling work and His infinite fulness of grace, are confirmed for ever in their loyalty and love. In Christ, the Redeemer and Reconciler, they have views of the divine nature, character, and glory they never had before, and which they can nowhere else obtain (*Spence*). It needed such a Mediator as Jesus, gifted with the highest divine and human powers, to restore the tone and harmony of a discordant universe, and tune every created spirit to the keynote of sweetest celestial music. The true melody of acceptable praise is learned only in the ardent, loving adoration of the Son of God.

III. **The means by which the reconciliation is effected.**—"And having made peace through the blood of His cross" (ver. 20). To make peace is the same thing as to reconcile; and the death of Christ—the shedding of His blood on the cross—was the method by which, in the infinite wisdom of God, the peace-producing reconciliation is secured. It was the voluntary self-sacrifice of Himself on the cross that constituted Jesus the grand reconciling Mediator of the universe. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. v. 18). Only by suffering could suffering be assuaged; only by dying could death itself be conquered. The cross is therefore the symbol of peace, of power, of triumph. There the law was fulfilled and magnified, the integrity of the divine perfections vindicated, justice was satisfied, mercy found its most bounteous outlet, and love its crowning joy. The cross is the source of every blessing to the fallen; the centre round which a disordered universe again revolves in beauteous order and rejoicing harmony; the loadstone that draws the trembling sinner to the needed and unutterable repose.

Lessons.—1. *The great Mediator has every qualification for His stupendous work.* 2. *The reconciliation of a disorganised universe is beyond the power of any subordinate agent.* 3. *Rebellious man can be restored to peace with God only as he yields himself up to the great Mediator.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 19. *The Fulness of Christ—*

I. Endowed with all divine and human excellencies.

II. Necessary to accomplish His reconciling work.

III. Was required and approved by God the Father.

Ver. 20. *Christ the Reconciler—*

I. Restored the friendship between God and man broken by sin.

II. Accomplished His work by the voluntary sacrifice of His life.

III. Introduces harmony into a disrupted universe.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 21, 22.

The Personal Blessings of Reconciliation.

Having shown the relation of Christ to God, to the whole creation, and to the Church, and His connection with all moral beings, the writer now proceeds to point out the relation of Christ to individual man in delivering him from the fetters of sin, and opening up the way of reconciliation with an outraged but loving Deity. In this passage we have a description of *the attitude of sinful man towards God and the method of His restoration.* We learn that:—

I. **Sin has placed man in antagonism to God.**—1. *Man is estranged from God.* "And you that were sometime alienated" (ver. 21). Sin severs the soul from God. The principle of cohesion—the consciousness of rectitude which God implanted in man in his sinless state—is weakened, and the sinner, breaking away from the centre of all goodness, drifts into an ever-widening and ever-darkening wilderness of alienation and evil. Sin places man at an infinite distance from God, leads him to shun the divine presence and disregard the divine overtures. A state of alienation is a state of danger; it is a state of spiritual death; and yet it is painful to observe how few in this state are conscious of their awful peril.

2. *Man is hostile to God.*—"Enemies in your mind" (ver. 21). The enmity follows from the estrangement, and both have their seat in the mind—"in the original and inmost *force of the mind* which draws after it the other faculties." The mind of man opposes the mind of God, sets up a rival kingdom, and organises an active rebellion against the divine Ruler. "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. viii. 7). If the hostility is not always flagrantly open, it is in the mind; the fountain of all sin is there. To be a stranger to God is to be an enemy of God: "He that is not with Me is against Me." The sinner is his own greatest enemy. It is a vain thing to fight against God; terrible will be the vengeance He will ere long wreak upon His enemies.

3. *Man's estrangement and hostility are evident in his actions.*—"By wicked works" (ver. 21). Man is stimulated by his sinful mind to perpetrate the most outrageous acts of rebellion against God, and to indulge in the most fiendish cruelty towards his fellow-man. But there are "wicked works" that may not figure in the criminal columns of the newspapers, nor be detected by the most vigilant watcher. To cherish envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness is equally heinous in the sight of God, and an unmistakable evidence of hostility towards Him. Sin conceived in the mind will, sooner or later, manifest itself in action.

II. **Man is reconciled to God in Christ.**—1. *The distinguished blessing.* "Yet now hath He reconciled" (ver. 21). To effect this all that is necessary is to persuade the sinner to cease his rebellion and submit to God. In Christ God is reconciled to the sinner; there is no need to persuade Him. He is love; the sinner is enmity. He is light; the sinner is darkness. He is nigh unto the sinner, but the sinner is afar off. The great object is to destroy the sinner's enmity, that he may have

divine love; bring him from darkness into divine light, bring him from his evil works nigh unto God, and reconciliation is the result (*Biblical Museum*). The amity existing between the soul and God, and which sin had interrupted, is now restored. Dear as are the friendships of earth, none can equal friendship with God.

"He calls a worm His friend,
He calls Himself my God;
And He shall save me to the end
Through Jesu's blood."

The loftiest communion of the soul with God is renewed. In this the soul finds its strength, consolation, life, rapture. How much does that man lose whose heart is not reconciled to God?

2. *The gracious medium of the blessing.*—"In the body of His flesh through death" (ver. 22). The apostle here refers in the most explicit terms to the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, and shows that the great work of reconciliation was effected in His body, and through death, for that body was crucified and actually died. The apostle perhaps aimed at correcting certain pseudo-spiritualistic notions regarding the person of Christ, busily propagated by the false teachers; some of whom held that Christ was an angelic emanation which animated the man Jesus for a time and withdrew from Him before He suffered. While maintaining the proper deity and glory of Christ's nature, the apostle plainly indicates that the divine method of reconciliation was by the incarnation and sacrificial death of Christ. He thus exalts the significance and value of the death of Christ. Reconciliation was not accomplished by the faultless example of Christ's life or the supernal wisdom of His teaching, but by His crucifixion and death. The cross, with its unfathomable mystery, is to them that perish foolishness; but to them that believe it is still the power and wisdom of God.

III. **The divine purpose in reconciliation is to promote man's highest blessedness.**—The magnificence of the believer's future career will be in marked contrast with the obscurity and imperfection of the present; but even in this life he is lifted by the reconciling grace of God to a high standard of moral excellence. The terms here employed, while referring to the same spiritual state, delineate its different aspects.

1. *The highest blessedness of man consists in his moral purity.*—"To present you holy" (ver. 22). This shows the condition of the soul in relation to God; it is freely offered to Him as a living sacrifice; the inward consciousness is wholly consecrated to the permanent indwelling of the Holy One; every thought, affection, and aspiration of the soul is hallowed; the whole man is enriched, ennobled, and radiant with a holy character.

2. *The highest blessedness of man consists in his personal blamelessness.*—"Unblamable" (ver. 22). This aspect of character has reference to one's self; it is the development in the outward life of the purity and consecration of the heart; it is a sacrificial term, and means without blemish. The soul is inspired with a sense of integrity, and of always acting for the best. When Socrates was asked, just before his trial, why he did not prepare himself for his defence, he calmly answered, "I have been doing nothing else all my life." A noble, blameless life is its own defence.

3. *The highest blessedness of man consists in his freedom from censure.*—"Unreprovable in His sight" (ver. 22). This feature of a holy character has reference to others. If man thus purified and blessed can bear the piercing glance of Him whose scrutiny no defect can escape, his character is unchallengeable. To be accepted and approved of God places him beyond the accusations of man or demon; the subtle insinuations of the Great Accuser are powerless to hurt. "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" To be holy, unblamable,

and unreprovable in the sight of God is to enjoy the highest honour and completest bliss. This is the ultimate result of reconciliation in Christ.

Lessons.—1. *Sin is the great foe of God and man.* 2. *The death of Christ is the means of reconciling sinful man to God.* 3. *The aim of reconciliation is to produce an irreproachable character.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 21. *Reconciliation by Christ.*

I. **Estrangement.**—1. *The cause*—by wicked works. 2. *The result*—not merely that God is angry, but we have become enemies to God.

II. **Reconciliation.**—1. *Christ has reconciled man to God.* 2. *He hath reconciled man to man.* 3. *He hath reconciled man to himself.* 4. *He hath reconciled man to duty.—Robertson.*

Ver. 22. *Holiness the Supreme End of Reconciliation.*

I. **Holiness an inward state and an outward result.**—"Holy, unblamable and unreprovable."

II. **Holiness alone can satisfy God.**—"In His sight."

III. **Holiness is the final completion of the soul.**—"To present you."

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 23.

The Condition of Man's Final Blessedness.

The ripest fruits can only be produced and gathered by careful and unremitting culture; so the enjoyment of the final blessings of reconciliation is conditioned upon continued allegiance to the gospel and the diligent practice of its precepts. We are taught in this verse that *the ultimate presentation to God of a perfectly holy and blameless character depends upon the believer's firm and persevering attachment to the gospel.* Observe:—

I. **Man's final blessedness depends upon his unswerving continuance in the faith.**—The *faith* is a comprehensive term; it is inclusive of all the great saving truths of the gospel, and of man's many-sided relation to them. There is implied:

1. *A continuance in the doctrines of the faith.*—What a man believes has a powerful influence in moulding his character. The truths submitted to our faith shed light upon matters of transcendent import and worth. The baffled and inquiring mind, straining with painful eagerness after light, finds its satisfaction and rest amid the soothing radiance of revealed truth. "In returning and rest shall ye be saved" (Isa. xxx. 15). Unbelief lures the soul from its restful confidence, sets it adrift amidst the cross currents of bewilderment and doubt, and exposes it to moral shipwreck and irrevocable loss. The soul's eternal safety is ensured, not by an infatuated devotion to mere *opinions* about certain dogmas, but by an intelligent, firm, and constant faith in divine verities.

2. *A continuance in the profession of the faith.*—The believer is a witness for the truth; and it is an imperative duty to bear testimony for Christ before the world (Rom. x. 9, 10). This is done when we unite in fellowship and service with the external Church of Christ on earth. The Church, as the representative of Christ, witnesses for Him in the life and conduct of its individual members. There is nothing binding as to the special form this witness-bearing should take in each particular case; nor is any man compelled, for the sake of profession, to wed himself to any particular branch of the Church catholic. There may be reasons that render it justifiable, and even necessary, for a man to sever himself from any given religious community and join another; but on no conceivable

ground can he be liberated from the duty of an open profession of his faith in Christ; his future acceptability to God hinges on his fidelity in this duty (Matt. x. 32).

3. *A continuance in the practice of the faith.*—Faith supplies the motive and rule of all right conduct. The test of all preceptive enactment and profession is in the life. The Christian character is developed and perfected, not by believing or professing, but by *doing* the will of God. The rewards of the future will be distributed according to our deeds (Rom. ii. 6-10).

4. *Continuance in the faith must be permanent.*—"Grounded and settled." The edifice, to be durable, must be well founded, that it may settle into a state of firmness and solidity; so faith, in order to survive the storms and temptations of this world, and participate in the promised good of the future, must be securely grounded and settled in the truth. In order to permanency in the faith, the truth must be—(1) *Apprehended intelligently.* (2) *Embraced cordially.* (3) *Maintained courageously.*

II. **Man's final blessedness depends upon his unchanging adherence to the gospel hope.**—1. *The gospel reveals a bright future.* It inspires the hope of the resurrection of the body, and of the glorification of it and the soul together in the eternal life of the future. Faith and hope are inseparably linked together; they mutually succour and sustain each other; they rise or fall together. Hope is the unquestioning expectation of the fruition of those things which we steadily believe. It is compared to an anchor, which, cast within the veil, fastened and grounded in heaven, holds our vessel firm and steady amid the agitations and storms of life's tempestuous sea. The gospel is the only source of genuine, deathless hope; all hopes grounded elsewhere wither and perish.

2. *The gospel to be effectual must come in contact with the individual mind.*—"Which ye have heard." Epaphras had declared to them the divine message. It had been brought to them; they had not sought it. Having heard and received the gospel, to relinquish its blessings would be inexcusable and ungrateful. In some way, either by direct preaching or otherwise, the gospel must come to man. There is no power of moral reformation in the human heart itself; the germinant principle of a better life must come from without; it is conveyed in the gospel word.

3. *The gospel is adapted to universal man.*—"Which was preached to every creature which is under heaven." Already it had spread into every part of the then known world, and its power was felt in every province of the Roman empire. The fine prophetic instinct of the apostle saw the universal tendency of the gospel, and, in spirit, anticipated the fulfilment of its generous mission. His motive is to emphasise the universality of the unchangeable gospel which is offered without reserve to all alike, and to appeal to its publicity and progress as the credential and guarantee of its truth. It is adapted to all men; it proclaims its message in all lands, and is destined to win the world to Christ. The faith and hope of the believer are based, not upon the uncertain declarations of false teachers, but upon that gospel, which is unchangeable in its character and universal in its appeal and adaptability to humanity; a strong reason is thus furnished for personal steadfastness.

4. *The gospel invested the apostle with an office of high authority.*—"Whereof I Paul am made a minister." Paul participated in the blessings of the gospel; he had felt its transforming power, and from his personal experience of its preciousness could, with the greater assurance and force, exhort the Colossians to continue in the faith. But in addition to this the gospel was committed to the apostle as a sacred trust and for faithful ministration; and while dwelling on the broad charity of the gospel as involving the offer of grace to the Gentiles, he is impressed with the dignity and responsibility of his office as he interjects,

somewhat abruptly, but with exquisite modesty, the words, "Whereof I Paul am made a minister." It has been said of man that he is the priest and interpreter of nature; that it is his function to observe and test phenomena, and interpret the laws that govern the material world. Another writer has said that "man is the organ of revelation for the Godhead." God can find no adequate form of revelation for Himself in the impersonal forces of nature; only through a being in His own image can He unfold to the universe His adorable character. But the highest office to which man can be elevated is to be a ministrant of gospel light and grace to his fellow-men.

5. *There is an implied possibility of relinquishing our hold of the gospel hope.*—"Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." The words do not necessarily imply doubt, but suggest the necessity for constant circumspection, vigilance, and care. The multiplicity and fulness of our blessings may prove a snare to us; prosperity tempts us to relax watchfulness, and we are in danger of becoming a prey to the wiles of the wicked one. Our retention of the gospel hope is rendered immovable by constant waiting upon God in fervent prayer, by a growing acquaintance with the word of promise, by continually anticipating in thought the bliss of the future.

Lessons.—1. *The gospel provides the surest basis for faith and hope.* 2. *Man's ultimate blessedness depends on his continued fidelity.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 24.

The Joy of Suffering for the Church.

A stolid indifference to suffering and a heroic endurance of the same were not unknown to the ancient pagans; but it is Christianity alone that has taught us to rejoice in afflictions; it supplies an ecstasy of emotion that renders us oblivious for the time being of encompassing trials. The apostle, as he pondered over the mighty work of reconciliation, and as he caught a glimpse of the amazing extent of divine mercy, could not but rejoice even in his sufferings. In this verse he *expresses his joy that, in suffering for the Church, he supplements that which was lacking in the afflictions of Christ.* Observe:—

I. **The representative character of the apostle's sufferings.**—1. *The apostle represented the suffering Saviour.* "The afflictions of Christ." We are not to suppose that the sufferings of Christ were incomplete in themselves or in their value as constituting a sufficient atonement. The passion of Christ was the one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. In this sense there could be no deficiency in Christ's sufferings, for Christ's sufferings being different in kind from those of His servants, the two are incommensurable. Neither the apostle nor any other could represent the expiatory and sacrificial aspect of the Redeemer's sufferings. But while His personal sufferings are over, His afflictions in His people still continue. He so thoroughly identifies Himself with them that their trials, sorrows, persecutions, and afflictions become His own. The apostle represented the suffering Saviour in what he endured for Christ and the Church. Thus he declared to the Corinthians, "The sufferings of Christ abound in us." The Church to-day is the representative of the suffering Saviour, and so completely is He identified with His people that He endures in them the pangs of hunger and thirst, shares their sickness and imprisonment, and reckons every act of kindness done to them as done to Himself (Matt. xxv.).

2. *The sufferings of the apostle supplemented what was lacking in the afflictions of Christ.*—"And fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh." In harmony with the representative character of the Church, we can understand how the afflictions of every saint and martyr do supplement the

afflictions of Christ. Every age of the Church has its measure of suffering. The Church is built up by repeated acts of self-denial in successive individuals and successive generations. They continue the work which Christ began. They bear their part, and supplement what is deficient in the sufferings of Christ (2 Cor. i. 7; Phil. iii. 10). As an apostle, Paul was a representative man, and his share in filling up what was wanting in these afflictions was considerable. In his own flesh he bore unexampled hardship, indignities, and distress. "In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prison more frequent, in deaths oft." The great Head of the Church was made perfect through suffering; so must the body be in all its relations and development. Through tribulation, more or less evident and intense, we must enter the kingdom. Suffering in itself has no virtue to elevate moral character; it is effective to this end only as it tends to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, only as it is borne for Christ, and in the Spirit of Christ. The great Mediator suffered to effect our salvation; and His people, on their part, fill up the suffering needed for the perfection of their spiritual life and for the full display of the divine glory.

II. **The vicarious character of the apostle's sufferings.**—"For His body's sake, which is the Church." The greater part of the suffering of the believer in this world is vicarious—is endured on behalf of others. It is thus we most nearly approach the spirit and example of Christ. St. Paul, as the pioneer missionary, the wise and edifying instructor, the diligent and anxious overseer, occupied a prominent and important position among the Churches, and his sufferings on their behalf would benefit them in many ways.

1. *The apostle's sufferings for the Church confirmed the faith of her converts.*—Thousands are shy in embracing Christianity, because they shrink from the suffering it seems to involve; thousands more retire from the Christian profession for the same reason. An example like that of Paul's—a man profoundly sincere, intensely earnest, calm and unmoved by the stoutest opposition, and triumphant amid acutest sufferings—encourages the timid and strengthens and confirms the tempted and wavering.

2. *The apostle's sufferings were for the consolation of the Church.*—Writing to the Corinthians, he says: "Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation." Suffering makes us more capable of sympathising with others. "Great hearts can only be made by great troubles. The spade of trouble digs the reservoir of comfort deeper, and makes more room for the water of consolation." The richest anointing of divine comfort is bestowed in the moment of severest suffering, and the consolation of one is the consolation of many. When Mr. James Bainham, who suffered under the reign of Henry VIII., was in the midst of the flames which had half consumed his arms and legs, he said aloud: "Oh, ye Papists, ye look for miracles, and here now you may see a miracle; for in this fire I feel no more pain than if I were in a bed of down, but it is to me a bed of roses!"

3. *The apostle's sufferings for the Church tended to promote her increase.*—The more the Egyptians afflicted the Hebrews the more they multiplied and grew. The devil's way of extinguishing goodness is God's way of advancing it. The apostle could testify, in the midst of his sufferings, that "the things which have happened to me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." Suffering seals the word spoken with a sacred and impressive significance. Many a convert has been won to the truth by the irresistible example of a suffering life.

III. **The high-toned spirit of the apostle's sufferings.**—"Who now rejoice in my suffering for you." Nature shrinks from suffering. It is altogether above nature to triumph in suffering. It is Christianity alone that lifts the spirit into the tranquil region of patient endurance and inspires us with joy in tribulation. It is not a love of suffering for its own sake—not a mad, morbid craving for the

ghastly honours of a self-sought martyrdom; but there is a nameless charm about the truths of Christianity that exalts the mind, thrills the soul, and transmutes sorrow into joy. Paul was imprisoned at Rome, bound in a chain for the gospel, when he wrote this epistle; but as the thoughts suggested by his theme grew in full-orbed magnificence before his mental vision—as he contemplated the lavish wealth of God's mercy in the call of the Gentiles who constituted the greater portion of the world's population—and as he saw all the glory of being allowed to share, and even to supplement, the sufferings of Christ, he rose above the consideration of his own personal trials, and in a sudden outburst of thanksgiving could exclaim, "*Now* I rejoice in my sufferings for you." Let us not repine at our afflictions. Not only is our own soul chastened and purified; but every pang, every tear, every trial in our lot, is a contribution to the filling up of that which is still behind in the afflictions of Christ. It baptises suffering with a new meaning, and arrays it in a new dignity, when it is viewed as a grand means of promoting the perfection, the purity, and unfading glory of the whole Church.

Lessons.—1. *It is an unspeakable honour to suffer for the Church of Christ.* 2. *The personal experience of the grace of Christ renders suffering for Him a joy.* 3. *The glory of the future will outweigh all we have suffered for the Church below.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 25—27.

The Pre-eminent Honour and Sublime Theme of the Christian Ministry.

The highest dignity and most solemn responsibility are conferred on man when he is entrusted with the ministration of God's word. It is the infinite condescension of God that we have this treasure in earthen vessels. He who, in the exercise of His unchallengeable wisdom, calls man to this work, can alone inspire and endow him with the necessary intellectual and moral fitness for the awful charge. In these verses we learn that the apostle was appointed a minister of the Church—a steward in God's household—charged to preach without reserve the whole gospel of God, to dispense to the Gentiles the stores which His bountiful grace provided. Note:—

I. **The Christian ministry is a divine institution.**—1. *The true minister is divinely commissioned.* "Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you" (ver. 25). The word "dispensation" involves the idea of stewardship. God governs His Church, not as a tyrant, who rules what is not his own, not as a monarch, who knows not a thousandth part of his subjects; but as a father, who knows, loves, and provides for his own children. The apostle was entrusted with a stewardship in God's household; he was "a steward of the mysteries of God." He received the office from God. This invested it with the highest dignity; yet he was the minister of the Church, and it was his joy to serve it, whatever might be the labour, sacrifice, or suffering entailed. The Christian ministry is not a lordship, but a stewardship; the minister is solemnly commissioned of God to maintain, defend, and dispense the truth that saves and edifies. There are moments when the minister can derive stimulus and courage for his work only by falling back upon the irrefutable fact of his divine call.

2. *The true minister is charged with the most complete proclamation of the divine word.*—"To fulfil the word of God" (ver. 25)—*to preach fully, to give its most complete development to.* The apostle had declared the gospel in all its depth and breadth of meaning, its wealth of blessing, and amplitude of revelation. He had proclaimed it in every direction, in harmony with his insight into its universal fitness and sufficiency. *Fulfil* implies the figure of a measure to be filled. The

true minister is empowered to preach the word of God in all the fulness of its internal import, and in accord with the universality of its outward purpose. Whether palatable or unpalatable, he must not shun to declare everywhere the whole counsel of God. The fulness there is in Christ and the urgent needs of humanity alike demand this.

II. **The Christian ministry deals with a theme of profound significance and ineffable worth.**—1. *It is designated a mystery.* "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations" (ver. 26). Mystery in the Scripture sense does not mean something actually incomprehensible, but something concealed or unknown until it please God to reveal it; something beyond the human mind to discover for itself, and which can only be attained by divine aid. The mystery comprehended two leading features—the divine purpose in saving man through a suffering and crucified Saviour, and the free admission of the Gentiles on equal terms with the Jews to the privileges of the covenant. Unlike the heathen mysteries, which were confined to a narrow circle, the Christian mystery is freely communicated to all. The mystery was concealed *from the ages*, which may be referred to the angels; and *from the generations*, which may be referred to men. Though faintly shadowed in types and figures, the truth would never have been discovered by man. In the revelation of the mystery the apostle applauded the lavish wealth of the divine goodness. The gospel is still a mystery to the unconverted.

2. *It is a mystery unveiled to those who are morally fitted to understand it.*—"But now is made manifest to His saints" (ver. 26). God chose His own time for making known the mystery of the gospel. Like all the divine procedures, the development was gradual, increasing in clearness and completeness as the fulness of time approached; that time embraced the advent of the incarnate Son of God, His ascension and enthronement in heaven, and the descent of the revealing Spirit. It is an axiom in optics that the eye only sees what it brings with it the power to see; and it is equally true in spiritual things that the soul comprehends the revelation of God only as it is prepared and fitted by the good Spirit. The holier the organ of divine revelation, the clearer the vision. It was not to the dignitaries of imperial Rome or the ruling powers of Judea, but to humble shepherds that the tidings of the Saviour's advent were first announced; not to the aristocracy of Pharisaic or Sadducean intellect, but to the plain, unlettered, believing fishermen of Galilee that the full glory of salvation by Christ was disclosed. Augustine has said, "Illiterate men rise and seize heaven, while we, with all our learning, are rolling in the filth of sin."

3. *The revelation of the mystery was an act of the divine will.*—"To whom God would make known" (ver. 27). There was nothing impelling Him to unfold this mystery but His own good pleasure. It was His sovereign will to disclose to the humble and devout, rather than to the proud and self-sufficient, the wondrous grace and glory of the gospel. The most sincere seeker after holiness could not of himself discover the mystery. But though made known in its richer spiritual developments only to the good, the good pleasure of God has put the knowledge of it within the reach of all.

4. *The revelation of the mystery endowed humanity with a vast inheritance of moral wealth.*—"What is the riches of the glory of this mystery" (ver. 27). The terms employed seem inadequate to convey the meaning intended. It is impossible fully to explain or illustrate the sublime truths they indicate. The gospel is a mystery full of glory—a glory unique, resplendent, unsurpassable; and this glory is dowered with riches, abundant, inexhaustible, and divine. The riches of the glory appear in the manifestation of the nature and attributes of God which the mystery supplies, and also in the moral wealth that has descended upon man. Here is the most lavish provision for the salvation of sinful and

perishing humanity—an inheritance of imperishable bliss. (1) *This inheritance enriched the most needy.* It was exhibited "among the Gentiles" (ver. 27). The Jews were the children of promise and possessed every religious privilege; the Gentiles were the children of mercy, and had never dared to dream of enjoying the blessings of the gospel. In the revelation of the mystery to them, the dispensation of grace achieved its greatest triumphs and displayed its transcendent glory. Here, too, was its wealth, for it overflowed all barriers of caste or race. Judaism was "beggarly" in comparison, since its treasures sufficed only for a few. The glory of the gospel was never so brilliant as in the moral transformations it effected among the degraded Gentiles. (2) *This inheritance includes the hope inspired by the indwelling Christ.* "Which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (ver. 27). The mystery of the gospel begins and ends in Christ, and Christ is in every believer the hope of glory. Only in Christ can we hope for the highest glory, and in Him we infallibly find all the blessedness we can enjoy in this world or expect in the future. In Him we have here as seed what we shall have in Him there as harvest. "Even now we sit there in Him, and shall sit with Him in the end."

Lessons.—1. *The Christian ministry involves solemn responsibilities.* 2. *The transcendent theme of the Christian ministry is divinely revealed.* 3. *Personal experience of the grace of God endows man with the clearest insight into its mystery, and the most satisfying possession of its spiritual riches.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 25-27. *The Glory of the Gospel—*

I. **A mystery once hidden, but now revealed** (vers. 26, 27).

II. **Enriches all nations with moral blessings.**

III. **Is entrusted to divinely authorised messengers to make known** (vers. 25, 27).

Ver. 27. *Christ in you the Hope of Glory.*

I. **What it implies of present experience.** — 1. *Generally — Christ among you.* 2. *Personally—Christ in you.*

II. **What it presages.**—"The hope of glory."

1. *Personal glory*—in the perfection of being where the servant is like his Lord.

2. *Relative glory*—sharing the throne with Jesus, and sharing in His triumph and glory.—*Preacher's Magazine.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 28, 29.

The Secret of Effective Preaching.

Much has been written concerning the inefficiency of the modern pulpit; and it has been argued that the press is now the great and successful rival of the preacher, and must ere long render his office nugatory. This prediction might possibly be fulfilled if the preaching of the gospel was simply a human institution and depended only on man for its permanency. But when we remember that preaching is a divine ordinance, and is adapted to reach and stir the heart as no other agency can, the preacher's function can never cease while human nature remains what it is, or while God honours His own institution with His blessing. Only as the pulpit is faithful to its grand theme and lofty mission will it be effective. The deepest want of the age is Christ; and that preaching will be irresistibly potent that most adequately represents Him. These verses reveal to us *the secret of effective preaching.*

I. **In order to effectiveness in preaching Christ must be the changeless theme.**—"*Whom* we preach" (ver. 28).

1. *Preach Christ as to the special characteristic and unrivalled excellencies of His person.*—The greatest men who ever lived, however brilliant and capacious their genius or stupendous their labours, never made so profound and widespread an impression upon humanity as Christ has done and is now doing. Their influence operated for only a limited period; His pervades all time—past, present, and future; theirs was confined to a narrow locality, His is diffused through the universe. The person of Christ is unique in this—that it combines two natures, the divine and the human. It was necessary He should be both God and man in order to fully accomplish the work He voluntarily undertook. As God, He met and satisfied all the requirements of Deity; and as man—putting Himself in our place—He realised and reached the extremities of our need, and thus fairly laying hold of us, gathering up and grasping the roots of our corrupt nature, He raised from sin to holiness, from earth to heaven. He is Emmanuel—God with us.

2. *Preach Christ in His mediatorial character.*—As the Prophet who testified of the truth of God; as the Priest who, by His one offering of Himself on the cross, has atoned for sin and made reconciliation possible; and as the King who has vanquished all our spiritual enemies and demands our absolute allegiance to His rule.

3. *Preach Christ as the Saviour of every man, and as the only Saviour.*—The threefold repetition of the phrase "every man" has a special significance, and emphasises the *universality* of the gospel. This great truth, a truth which the apostle sacrificed his life in establishing, had been endangered by the doctrine of a ceremonial exclusiveness taught by the Judaizers in several places, and was now endangered by the doctrine of an intellectual exclusiveness taught by the Gnosticizers at Colossæ. Christ must be proclaimed as the Saviour of men of every class, community, and country. He is the only Saviour, for "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." The preaching of Christ is no narrow theme, but stands essentially related to all the noblest truths of the universe.

II. In order to effectiveness variety of method must be adopted.—The declaration of the truth must be:—

1. *Authoritative.*—"Whom we preach" (ver. 28). The New Testament idea of preaching involves three elements—the announcement of joyful tidings; the proclamation of truth as by a herald, urgently and authoritatively; and the conviction and persuasion of men to belief by means of arguments. The preacher is the ambassador of God, and the message must be delivered as coming from Him, in His name, and by His authority.

2. *Admonitory.*—"Warning every man." Sin has placed man in imminent peril, and its tendency is to deaden his sensibilities and render him oblivious of his danger. Hence he must be roused to concern and repentance by faithful remonstrance, by earnest exhortation, by solemn admonition, by impassioned appeal.

3. *Instructive.*—"Teaching every man" (ver. 28). Not only must the emotions be swayed, but the understanding enlightened. It is not enough to convince the unbeliever of his error, not enough to bring home to the lover of sin the vileness and enormity of his transgressions, but by clear and forcible exposition and persuasion the will of the individual offender must be seized, and with firm, yet loving pressure biassed to seek after the light, truth, and purity that once were shunned.

4. *With shrewd insight as to its adaptability.*—"In all wisdom" (ver. 28). The ancients spoke of a blind faith in their mysteries which belonged to the many, and of a higher knowledge that was confined to the few. The apostle, while declaring that in the gospel the fullest wisdom was offered to all alike, without restriction, exercised discretion as to the method in which he presented it to the individual.

The style of his address at Athens would be different from that adopted at Jerusalem. This involves a study of character, and of what goes to make it—habits, customs, opinions, sympathies, and the general circumstances of life-culture.

III. **In order to effectiveness man must be aided in realising the highest ideal of the Christian character.**—"That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (ver. 28). The gospel is a mirror in which is glassed the portrait of the character after which each believer is to model his own. That character is not simply a development of one's own natural manhood, so much as it is something added to and thrown around that manhood, lifting it into dignity and transfiguring it with a glorious beauty. The gospel reveals the ideal of the Christian character after which the soul is continually to aspire. That ideal, in all its loveliness and witchery, is projected before the soul's inmost vision in the Spirit and life of the man Christ Jesus. He who approximates nearest to the Christly character attains the highest moral perfection. It is the sublime mission of the preacher not to gratify the intellect, charm the imagination, or expand the mind by propagating the ideas of a transcendental philosophy; but to strengthen the soul in the great contest with evil, to supply it with holiest motives, to promote its spiritual progress, to present it "perfect in Christ Jesus."

IV. **In order to effectiveness there must be self-denying toil and the vigorous forth-putting of divinely inspired energy.**—"Whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working which worketh in me mightily" (ver. 29). All great ideas have cost the solitary and individual thinker unspeakable labour, and not a little suffering in the endeavour to elaborate and make them known and set them in their due relation before the world. The world is ruled by ideas; but the revolution they occasion is a slow and painful process. The apostle was the custodian of a great idea—that the gospel was intended for all, and must be fully preached to all. The idea is familiar to us; but it was new to that age, and revolutionised the whole realm of human thought. If the apostle had been content to preach an exclusive gospel, he might have saved himself more than half the troubles of his life. But he saw the magnitude of the issues at stake; he espoused the God-given truth with all the strength of his great nature; he confronted the colossal prejudices of the ages; he trained himself in the discipline of self-denying toil; he suffered as only the true martyr-soul can suffer; he strove with an agony of earnestness to make known the whole truth; and, aided by the mighty working of the divine power within him, he triumphed signally. Preaching is always effective when it is the consentaneous outworking of the divinely imparted energy within the man. The preacher alone, however strenuous his efforts, is powerless; but inspired and strengthened by the divine Spirit, and acting in harmony with His promptness and help, he is mighty to prevail.

Lessons.—1. *Every sermon should be full of Christ.* 2. *The preacher should be master of every method that will ensure success.* 3. *That sermon will be most effective that is prepared and preached under the most direct influence of the divine Spirit.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 28. *Apostolic Preaching.*

I. **They preached Christ as the only foundation of a sinner's hope of salvation.**

II. **As the object of supreme love.**

III. **As the source of our supplies.**

IV. **As the model of our lives.**—*W. Antliff, D.D.*

Ver. 29. *The Christian Ministry—*

I. **Involves strenuous labour and patient suffering.**

II. **Is dependent on divine help.**

III. **Ascribes all its success to God.**

CHAPTER II.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **What great conflict.**—R.V. "how greatly I strive." It is a repetition of the thought of the previous verse expressed in terms of the arena. **For them at Laodicea.**—About a dozen miles distant from Colossæ.

Ver. 2. **The mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.**—The R.V. has greatly simplified this perplexing phrase: "The mystery of God, even Christ." Of the eleven various readings extant (given by Lightfoot) that of our A.V. is to all appearance the latest and worst.

Ver. 3. **In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**—When we have "laid our reasonings at His feet," He does not stultify us. Neither pure reason nor practical reason is to "fust in us unused," if they seek their answers in Him.

Ver. 4. **Should beguile you with enticing words.**—The word for "beguile" is only again found in the New Testament at Jas. i. 22. It means to lead into error by sophistical reasoning. Enticing words, or persuasive speech, plausible but false.

Ver. 5. **The stedfastness of your faith in Christ.**—Some think "stedfastness" (as well as "order" preceding) may have a military significance. If so, it would mean the compact firmness of the phalanx. Others say that meaning is not inherent, but derived from its context, which here does not suggest it. The word is used in the LXX. for firmament—a solid vault, as it was thought.

Ver. 7. **Rooted and built up.**—St. Paul passes over rapidly from one conception to another of quite a different kind. We cannot call it mixed metaphor. We commonly speak of a new town planted or a house planted.

Ver. 8. **Beware lest any man spoil you.**—R.V. "maketh spoil of you." The word for "spoil" means "to lead away as booty," as the Sabeans swooped down on the oxen and asses of Job and carried them away as their own property. **Through philosophy and vain deceit.**—We are reminded of the saying, "It is the privilege of a philosopher to depreciate philosophy." And then men say, "How well he's read to reason against reading!" St. Paul speaks here of philosophy "falsely so called." The love of wisdom can never be a dangerous thing to men whose Master said, "Be wise as serpents"; only it must be the "wisdom which cometh from above." St. Paul's *alias* for what they call philosophy is "empty fallacy," a hollow pretence; or what George Herbert might name "nothing between two dishes." **After the tradition of men.**—Something passed over from one to another, as the deep secrets of the esoteric religions were whispered into the ears of the perfect. That a matter has been believed always, everywhere, and by all is no guarantee of its truth, as Galileo knew.

Ver. 9. **In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.**—There is no minimising the significance of this statement. It is either true or it is the wildest raving of blasphemy. "Dwelleth"—has its settled abode. A change of prefix would give us the word in Luke xxiv. 18. "Dost thou alone *sojourn*?" etc. Dualism separates God from matter as far as possible; the Incarnation unites Him for ever with it. "Great is the mystery." "Godhead." Though twice before in our A.V. (Acts xvii. 29; Rom. i. 23), the word here differs from both.

Ver. 10. **And ye are complete in Him.**—These minor powers of whom you have heard are all subordinate to Him in whom directly you have all you need. There is no need to go *viâ* Philip and Andrew, Mary or Michael, when "we would see Jesus."

Ver. 11. **In whom also ye are circumcised . . . by the circumcision of Christ.**—What to the Jew was a bodily act, at best symbolical and of no value otherwise, was to the Colossian disciple a spiritual renovation, so complete as to render the old symbol of it inadequate.

Ver. 12. **Buried . . . risen.**—Referring to the definite acts when, as Christian converts, they went beneath the baptismal waters and emerged to live the faith thus publicly confessed. **Through the faith of the operation of God.**—An obscure phrase. The R.V. is clear: "Through faith *in* the working of God."

Ver. 14. **Blotting out the handwriting.**—"Wiping out the old score," as we might say. All that bond which was valid against them Christ had for ever rendered nugatory whilst they confided in His salvation. **Against us, which was contrary to us.**—We have here the author of those hot protests against work-righteousness. The threatening aspect of the law is expressed in this reiteration. The law not only menaces wrong-doers; it proceeds against them with punishment. **Nailing it to His cross.**—The bond is discharged and may be filed. We are reminded of St. Peter's equally bold expression: "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body [*to*, and] on the tree" (1 Pet. ii. 24).

Ver. 15. **Having spoiled principalities.**—R.V. "having put off from Himself." The authorities are divided between the A V. and R.V. The English reader must not conclude that he has again the word and idea of ver. 8. The apostle says that Christ had flung off from Himself the powers of wickedness. As these Colossians needed no intercessions of good angels, so, on the other hand, they need fear nothing from the maleficent powers of darkness, now vanquished.

Ver. 16. **Let no man therefore judge you.**—They could not well prevent an adverse judgment being given on their disregard of what the ritualists thought to be of supreme moment, but they could refuse to argue about such trifles.

Ver. 17. **Shadow . . . body.**—The relationship is indicated here of the old ceremonial worship to the worship of the Spirit. To confound shadow and substance, or mistake the shadow for the substance, has ever been the fatal error of ritualism.

Ver. 18. **Let no man beguile you of your reward.**—R.V. "let no man rob you of your prize." There seems to be implied some such thought as this: Do not allow these heretical teachers to lay down for you the conditions on which the prize shall be yours; for when they pronounce in your favour, "the Lord, the righteous Judge," pronounces against you. **In a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels.**—In acts of self-imposed abasement in the presence of invisible beings. St. John tells us of the rebuke administered by the angel before whom he prostrated himself: "See thou do it not: . . . worship God." But there are men who would say, "Nay, my Lord," and continue their forbidden worship. **Intruding into those things which he hath not seen.**—The change in the R.V. is considerable: "dwelling in the things which he hath seen." The apostle is apparently speaking ironically of the boasted manifestations made to the Gnostic teachers.

Ver. 20. **Dead . . . from the rudiments of the world.**—Such as are given in ver. 21. **Subject to ordinances.**—Why do you consent to receive these "burdens grievous to be borne"?

Ver. 21. **Touch not; taste not; handle not.**—"These three prohibitions apply probably (1) to marriage, (2) to the use of certain foods, (3) to contact with material objects" (*Godet*). The rigour of the prohibitions is greatest in the last of the three. Note the change in R.V.: "handle not, nor *taste*, nor TOUCH."

Ver. 23. **Neglecting of the body.**—A.V. margin, "punishing or not sparing." R.V. text, "severity to the body." No doubt the apostle felt that on this subject he would need to tread cautiously, for he himself had beaten his body into subjection (1 Cor. ix. 27). **Not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.**—The R.V. gives light on the obscurity: "not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh." This is the evidence which for ever disqualifies asceticism in its many forms. We can understand how a Lenten fast or a hair-shirt may make a man irritable. If they are of any value *in themselves*, monastic annals need revision and expurgation, and the Christian finds himself far outdone by the dervish.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—4.

Ministerial Anxiety.

The more clearly we apprehend truth in its many-sided aspects and in its complex and vital relations, the more grievous and calamitous does error appear. Error cannot come into collision with truth without creating confusion of ideas and much mental distraction, and as a consequence robbing the soul of the peace and solace it enjoyed. The apostle saw the dangerous tendency of the doctrines advocated by the false teachers against whom his epistle was directed, and he was deeply concerned lest the pure and simple gospel embraced by the new converts should be contaminated. As one drop of ink pollutes the whole vessel of water, as one stroke of the hammer diverts the rod from a straight line and spoils it throughout its whole length, so one single error obscures and warps the holiest truth.

I. **This anxiety was intense.**—"For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have" (ver. 1). In the closing words of the preceding chapter the apostle referred to his stern self-discipline in training himself for his arduous and self-denying labours as an apostle; and in this verse he expands the same thought, and would have the converts know the magnitude of the struggle which his anxiety for their welfare cost him. This conflict refers not only to his external labours on behalf of the Churches, in journeys, perils, privations, persecutions, and imprisonments, but more especially to his fervent wrestling with God in prayer,

like Jacob of old; his importunity, like the widow with the unjust judge; his inward soul struggles in earnest intercession for their stability in the faith. The danger must have been serious that produced in such a man so great an agony of anxiety: great souls are not affected by trifles. People little know what their pastors pass through: when they think them the most at leisure, then are they the least so—the fervent conflict of prayer is going on in secret. A knowledge of the minister's anxiety is sometimes necessary to create a responsive sympathy, and to teach the people the care and anxiety they should feel for their own salvation.

II. **This anxiety was disinterested.**—"For you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh" (ver. 1). The solicitude of the apostle was not restricted to the Colossians, as though they were more liable than others to defection from the truth, but embraced the converts in the neighbouring city of Laodicea. In this populous and thriving city, celebrated at that time for its immense commercial wealth and for the high intellectual attainments of its philosophers, the heretic leaven had begun to work; and the subsequent history of the Church there showed that it spread only too surely aud disastrously (Rev. iii. 14-18). The apostle also extended his anxious regard to "as many as had not seen his face in the flesh." The bulk of our troubles in this life we endure on behalf of others. The Christian spirit, in its broad, comprehensive charity, gives us a deep interest in all who have any connection with Christ. Fervent prayer on behalf of others, notwithstanding the sneers of some modern scientists, is efficacious, irrespective of locality or of actual personal intercourse. Prayers offered in private are often answered in a strange, unlooked-for manner in public. God has a sovereign right to select the *mode* in which He answers the prayers of the faithful. An old divine has said: "If we would reap openly in the conversion of souls and their steady walk, we must plough in secret with prayers and tears." Our anxiety about the welfare of others is a strong evidence of our possessing the genuine love of the truth. It was a trenchant aphorism of Coleridge that, "He who begins by loving Christianity better than truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or Church better than Christianity, and end in loving himself better than all."

III. **This anxiety had special reference to the highest spiritual attainments of believers.**—1. *The apostle was solicitous for the confirmation of their faith.* "That their hearts might be comforted" (ver. 2)—*i.e. encouraged, confirmed.* The apostle knew the subtle power of error in disintegrating the heart's confidence, producing trouble, dejection, doubt, and perplexity. Hence he was anxious so to present the truth as it is in Jesus, as to restore and cheer the bewildered mind and settle it on the firm basis of an intelligent and cordial faith. No man can reach the high attainments of the Christian life whose heart is not at rest in God.

2. *The apostle was solicitous for their union in love.*—"Being knit together in love" (ver. 2). The heart can never enjoy solid comfort till it is united in the love, as well as in the faith, of the truth. Error divides as well as distresses; it snaps the bond of love, splits the Christian Church into parties, rends what ought to be the seamless robe of Christ. Where there is discord in the understanding about fundamental truths, there cannot be concord in the will and affections. The stability of believers depends upon their being knit together in a mutual love, as the timbers of a building are joined and compacted by a carpenter—such is the original signification of the word—each part being fitted in with the rest, and all subserving the firmness and safety of the whole. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

3. *The apostle was solicitous they should be enriched with the unspeakable wealth of the divine mystery.*—(1) *The divine mystery is explained in the unique person*

and endowments of Christ. "The mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (vers. 2, 3). Christ embraced in His own person the divine and human natures. As God, He is equal with the Father, and possesses in Himself all the essentials of Deity; but as man He is dowered with moral treasures surpassing the endowments of the highest angel. The mystery is not so much Christ, as Christ containing in Himself "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." There is in Christ an all-sufficiency for every possible want of man—copious and inexhaustive riches of eternal and saving wisdom. These riches are hid in Christ as treasure in a field—concealed from the gaze of the mere passer-by, the careless, indolent, and proud; but revealed to and enjoyed by the humble, diligent, and persevering seeker. "He who is not content with Christ, but goes out of Him to philosophy or tradition, forsakes the treasures for the miserable beggary of human counterfeits." It is still a mystery to the world how Christ can be the grand depositary of all wisdom; and the mystery is dispelled only as the soul becomes savingly acquainted with Him. (2) *The believer is privileged to gain the full knowledge of the divine mystery.*—"To the acknowledgment of the mystery" (ver. 2). The word implies that the knowledge of God and of Christ is the perfection of knowledge. The ancient sage declared: "If thou criest after knowledge, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." And the apostle prayed for the Ephesians that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ might give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." This knowledge is to be not a simple perception of the truths contained in the divine mystery, but a full, firm, and distinct knowledge as the result of careful sifting, and the actual experience of their soul-transforming power. We know nothing to purpose until it is strongly grasped by the heart as well as by the understanding. (3) *A clear and profound understanding of the divine mystery is the true enrichment of the mind.*—"Unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding" (ver. 2). The vast store of moral riches here indicated is opposed to the poverty of the mind, which has only a few confused, unconnected truths about the gospel laid up in its treasury. By *the full assurance of understanding* is meant an unclouded perception and firm conviction of the truth revealed in the gospel. This is obtained only by diligent study and the inner illumination of the Spirit; the understanding is cleared up, the judgment settled, and the individual believer enabled to apprehend each part of the gospel in its essential relation to the grand whole, and thus to grasp with a firm hold the salient features of the divine mystery. In this assured knowledge of the greatest truths the mind of man finds it true enrichment: its abiding rest and felicity. "Wisdom is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her." Every other kind of knowledge, however rare and extensive, is in itself poor and unsatisfying.

IV. **This anxiety prompted the apostle faithfully to warn the Church.**—"And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words" (ver. 4). Error assumes the most seductive forms: it charms with its eloquence, bewilders with its subtle reasoning, misleads with its bold, assured statements of half-truths. The soul is fascinated as by the gaze of a basilisk, and morally poisoned by its breath. "Men are easily persuaded to believe that which flatters their own vanity, and dilutes or modifies the gospel, so as to accommodate it to their own degenerate tastes." It is needful to maintain a vigilant outlook, and be on our guard against every phase of false teaching. Some contend that words have little to do with religion; that true religion is a sentiment in the soul independent of words. The apostle thought differently when he exhorted to hold fast "the form of sound words"; and in this verse he distinctly avers that enticing words may beguile. He solemnly warns the Ephesians, who were

assailed with a similar class of errors: "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." The most effectual antidote to any heresy is the faithful, simple proclamation of the doctrine of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This is the clue that leads us out of all the mazes of error.

Lessons.—1. *The true minister is anxious to promote the highest good of the people.* 2. *All truth finds its explanation and all error its refutation in Christ, the Source of eternal wisdom.* 3. *False doctrine should be fearlessly and faithfully exposed.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 3.

The Hidden Treasures of Wisdom in Christ.

Wisdom does not consist in the possession of varied and extensive knowledge. The student may be deeply read in ancient and long-forgotten lore, be versed in the entire circle of the arts, sciences, and philosophies, be intelligibly familiar with the best literature of the day, be a walking encyclopædia, a literary fountain gushing in a perennial stream of information, and yet be far from being a wise man. Wisdom is the practical application of knowledge, the attainment of the highest moral results by the use of the best and simplest means. The cry of the human intellect in all ages has been, "Where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding?" The greatest souls have toiled painfully in search of the coveted treasure, but failed to discover it. Their mightiest endeavours have terminated in disappointment and despair. True wisdom is a divine revelation. The world by wisdom knew not God; and one of the profoundest philosophers of any age, and who approached as near the threshold of the grand discovery as the unaided human mind was perhaps ever permitted to do, had to confess with a sigh, "If ever man is destined to know the good and the true, it must be by a revelation of the Deity." That wisdom which all need, and of which all are in quest, is found only in Christ. This verse declares that *Christ is the unfathomable depositary of the highest wisdom.* Observe:—

I. **That Christ is the inexhaustible Source of the truest wisdom.**—"In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." The false teachers at Colossæ, like certain pretentious philosophers of modern times, boasted of the vast range of their wisdom and knowledge. They discussed questions, some of which, strange to say, are reproduced and advocated to-day—questions on the nature of the world, the eternity or non-eternity of matter, the chief good of man, the orders and ranks of the angelic hierarchies and their relation to the mediatorial work of Christ, the necessity of observing the ceremonies and austerities of the law, and of the beauty and grandeur of the theories of Plato and Pythagoras, the ruling philosophers of the time. But all this is simply "the wisdom of this world and of the princes of this world, which come to nought." It is only in Christ we find all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge to furnish and enrich the mind and to guide into the way of salvation. He is "to us who are saved the power of God and the wisdom of God." If, for the sake of illustration, we classify the principal sources of human knowledge into poetry, history, philosophy, and theology, we may assert that only in Christ does each department find its fullest explication, and from Him derive its significance and worth.

1. *Christ is the loftiest ideal and purest inspiration of the poet.*—Poetry occupies an important place in contributing to the sum of human knowledge, and to the culture, development, and happiness of man. It was the language of the world's infancy, as it is of the infancy of man; the spontaneous outflow

of the soul, on its first acquaintance with the marvels of the present life, expresses itself in strains of poetic music. It is true this great gift has been abused, and often made the instrument of debasing instead of elevating the mind. Hence Plato, in constructing his ideal republic, would exclude the poets because of the evil tendency of some of their productions, though he accords them all honour on account of their learning and genius. The genuine poet pants after the noblest expression of the beautiful and the good. Christ is the glorious ideal and embodiment of the pure and beautiful; the poet drinks in his most ravishing inspiration from Him, and exhausts all the resources of his genius in attempting to portray the exquisite lineaments of His matchless character.

2. *Christ is the grandest hero of the historian.*—History furnishes us with the knowledge of man and his doings in all ages—in his individual, social, and national aspects. It traces the development of the race from the first solitary man to the peopling of the world with the varied nationalities which now swarm upon its surface. But the history of the world and man would be a dark, unsolvable enigma if the name of Christ could be struck out. The story of redemption unites Christ with the destiny of man in all ages—past, present, and future; and "no history of the world, political or moral, can be either just or accurate that does not find in Christ foretold to come, or in Christ come and crucified, its centre and its key." The world was created by Christ; it exists for Him; and, without interfering with individual freedom, it may be said that He makes its history: His name and influence are traceable everywhere, and are everywhere potent. The devout historian finds in Him the hero in whom all excellencies combine, and whose exploits he loves to chronicle.

3. *Christ is prominent among the sublimest themes of the philosopher.*—A philosophy that does not recognise the divine plunges its votaries into labyrinthine darkness; its legitimate office is to conduct to God. Coleridge has well said: "In wonder all philosophy began; in wonder it ends; and admiration fills up the interspace. But the first wonder is the offspring of ignorance; the last is the parent of adoration." In every sphere where philosophy penetrates it is confronted with ineffaceable evidences of the power and presence of Christ. Among the splendid phenomena of the natural creation—the forces that move, and the laws that control its vast machinery—Christ is acknowledged as the creating and ruling spirit; and only as the material world is regarded as the theatre of redemption, and of moral conflict and discipline, does the philosopher reach its highest meaning: in the realm of mind, the true dignity, preciousness, and immortal endowments of the soul are understood only as we apprehend that the life of the great Redeemer was sacrificed to effect its ransom; and, in the sphere of morals, we decipher the relation of man to man, and to society at large, learn the duties and obligations we owe to each other and to God, discover the standard of right actions, and are aided in explaining and harmonising the inequalities that exist, when we gain an insight into the moral relation of Christ to the whole race.

4. *Christ is the all-comprehensive subject of the theologian.*—God is inscrutable to the unchristianised reason. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?" Men have sought God in all ages with tears, sacrifices, and sufferings indescribable; but in vain. Christ is the only way to the Father; in Himself He reveals and illustrates the Godhead. All our saving and renewing knowledge of God, and of our manifold relations to Him, we owe entirely to Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." In the domain of theology "Christ is all in all." But for Him the office of the theologian would be an impossibility.

II. That the treasures of divine wisdom are discoverable by the sincere and earnest seeker.—They are *hid*; but not so hid as to be beyond our reach. They are intended for discovery and appropriation. Their brilliancy sparkles even in their hiding-place. They are like a mine, whose riches, though faintly indicated on the surface, are concealed in the depths of the earth. The more diligently the mine is worked, the more precious and abundant the ore appears. So in Christ there are treasures of wisdom unseen by the superficial and careless observer; but to the humble and believing student new and deeper veins are perpetually opening up, until, still pursuing his search, he is dazzled by the splendour and inexhaustible fulness of wealth, surpassing all finite comprehension, and filling him with admiration and awe.

Lessons.—1. *Man universally covets wisdom.* 2. *The highest wisdom is treasured up in Christ for man.* 3. *If man finds it not, it is his own fault.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1-3. *Christian Unity.*

I. We cannot but lament the divisions and scandals of the professed disciples of Jesus, which have more than anything else prevented the universal diffusion of the gospel.

II. We should make it manifest, by acknowledging the truth in whomsoever found, that we are not bigoted sectarians.

III. As regards those with whom we are united in fellowship, let us prove by our humble, modest, and kind disposition that we are lovers of peace and concord.

IV. Christian unity is promoted by mutual efforts to edify one another in faith and love.—*W. France.*

Ver. 3. *Christ the Treasury of Wisdom and Knowledge.*—The revelation of Christ not merely teaches us a series of truths of inexpressible importance, and without it wholly unattainable, but it also, as a great central discovery, harmonises all our beliefs, sacred and secular, binds them together as its own servants, gives them a new interest, position, and colouring, and dignifies the pursuit of them as a labour in the very cause of God Himself, begun and prosecuted with a view to His glory—for to know the beauty of the temple is to know the glory of the Architect.—*Archer Butler.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 5.

Apostolic Praise of Order and Stability.

It is an impressive spectacle to see a well-armed body of troops drawn up in compact military order, resisting with calm, unflinching courage the terrible charge of the enemy. Every point of attack is strongly guarded, every vacancy occurring in the exposed front line is instantly supplied, and the broad, deep phalanx remains impenetrable and invincible. The enforced companionship of the apostle with the soldiers of the prætorian guard, in his imprisonment in Rome, where he would be a daily witness of their exercises, might suggest some such metaphor as this to his mind. And as he foresaw the confusion and ruin that would be introduced into the Colossian Church if the fatal errors of the false teachers were triumphant, in this verse he *expresses his joyous satisfaction in being assured of the orderly array and firmly set stability which their faith in Christ presented against the assaults of the foe.* Note :—

I. The apostle commended the external order of the members of the Church.—"Beholding your order." This is mentioned first, because it first meets the eye, though all external discipline and order must necessarily spring out of and accompany a genuine faith. There is no form of ecclesiastical government that can

claim an exclusively divine sanction. The New Testament lays down broad, general principles; and the Christian Church has been left to shape itself according to circumstances and in harmony with the indications of divine Providence. True order depends, not upon the form of Church polity we adopt—whether prelacy, presbytery, or congregationalism—as upon the consistency, fidelity, and union of the individual members of the Church. Order that is not based on a vigorous Church-life, and regulated by it, is empty and powerless; it is like the ice of the Polar regions, which sometimes assumes forms of exquisite and wondrous beauty, but is cold, heartless, dead. The Scriptural directions on this subject are brief, but pregnant with meaning: "Let all things be done decently and in order"; "God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the Churches of the saints"; "Let all things be done with charity"; "The rest will I set in order when I come." While organisation that is not instinct with a moving, pervasive, and aggressive life is cumbersome, vapid, and useless; on the other hand, Christian steadfastness is imperilled where order is disregarded.

II. **The apostle commended their stability in the faith.**—"And the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." These words describe the internal condition of the Church; and the picture of a firm, confident reliance on Christ which he beheld delighted the soul of the anxious apostle. Order is the fence and guard, steadfastness the end in view, order is the garb and ornament, steadfastness the substance of the Christian character. Faith girds and strengthens the soul with its unchanging and invincible verities; the shafts of error and profanity assail it in vain. When the Roman proconsul, from his judgment-seat, urged the holy Polycarp to save his life by cursing the name of Jesus Christ, the venerable martyr calmly answered: "For eighty-six years I have served him; He has never yet done me harm. How can I blaspheme my King, who has saved me!" Man is great and noble, not by what he possesses, not by what he says, not by what he gives, not by what he does, but by what he *believes*. The most magnanimous outward conduct may be, after all, a very imperfect representation of the soul's deepest faith. What a man believes is not therefore a matter of comparative indifference, but a question of supreme importance; he must have a clear, definite creed. True a creed is but the visible, expressive mould of the inward conception of the truth believed; but as the tendency of all life is to assume form, and can be understood by us only as it does so, so faith, as a vital and irresistibly active principle, must inevitably shape itself into some outward expression. Where there is no creed, there is no faith; a creedless man believes in nothing, and he is himself that nothing. He has no more cohesion in him than the separate particles of sand in the hour-glass. All true faith takes its rise "in Christ," and gathers its stability by continuing in Him.

III. **The apostle cherished a deep, personal interest in their welfare.**—1. *In spirit he was present with them.* "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit." We have no satisfactory evidence that the apostle had as yet personally visited Colossæ. Epaphras, the faithful and anxious evangelist, sought him out in Rome, perhaps for the purpose of laying before him the state of Colossæ and of the neighbouring Churches on the banks of the Lycus. The apostle's interest in Colossæ was further excited at this time by meeting with Onesimus, a runaway slave, belonging to the household of Philemon, a Colossian. The apostle was the means of bringing the runaway to repentance and to the enjoyment of the liberty of the spiritually free. These circumstances deepened St. Paul's concern in the affairs of the Colossian Christians; he grasped all the points of the situation, was keenly alive to the gravity of the dangers with which they were threatened, and, as though he were personally present in their midst, expressed his sincere sympathy with them in their trials, and his profound satisfaction on hearing of their steady adherence

to the truth. It is not necessary to be locally near in order to hold spiritual intercourse; oceans may roll between individuals whose souls participate in the highest communion. The soul is where it loves: thither it directs its affections, wishes, and hopes.

2. *He rejoiced in their fidelity.*—"Joying and beholding." As though an actual spectator of their order and steadfastness, his soul is filled with joy. The expression of his hearty interest in their state, and his praise of their fidelity, prepared them to give heed to his cautions against the seductions of false teachers, and to his exhortations to perseverance. No disappointment is so poignant as that arising from the failure of Christian toil, and no joy so exquisite as the joy of success. The spectacle of a Christian Church poised in beauteous order, and strengthened with the might of an unfalteringly aggressive faith, is a subject of unspeakable joy to God, to His angels, and to all true ministers.

Lessons.—1. *Attention must be paid to the outward as well as the inward state of the Church.* 2. *While the Church preserves its order and stability it is invulnerable.* 3. *It is cause of rejoicing when the Church faithfully maintains the conquests already won.*

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

Suggestive Features of the Christian Life.

The Christian life is essentially progressive. The law that governs its existence involves perpetual, active increase; if it did not grow, it would cease to live. Unlike the principle of growth in the natural world, we cannot conceive a point in the religious life where it necessarily becomes stationary, and then begins to decline, on the other hand, every provision is made for its unceasing expansion in the highest moral excellencies.

I. **The Christian life begins in a personal reception of Christ.**—"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord" (ver. 6). Religion is not a self-development of innate human goodness, as many in the present day believe and teach. The soul of man is infected with the virulent poison of sin; no part has escaped the destructive moral taint. The utmost exercise of the unsanctified powers of the soul can therefore tend only towards the development of its own inborn corruption. As the vinegar plant reproduces itself with great rapidity, and impregnates every branch and fibre with its own essential acid, so the evil reigning in man reproduces itself with marvellous rapidity, and permeates the whole soul with its debasing poison. Religion is a receiving—the receiving of a gift, and that a divine gift. It is the growth and development of the supernatural in man. "Christ in you the hope of glory."

1. *Christ is received as* THE CHRIST.—The Colossian heresy aimed at subverting the true idea of the Christ, the *Anointed One*, commissioned by the Father to effect the reconciliation of the world to Himself; it interposed a graduated series of angelic mediators, and thus thought to discredit the sole and absolute mediatorship of Christ. To receive the Son of God effectually is to receive Him in all that He claimed to be, and all that He came to do, as the divine, specially anointed Son, who alone and fully manifested the Father, and who is the only mediator between sinful man and God. It is of unspeakable importance to catch the true idea of the character and office of Christ at the beginning of the Christian life.

2. *Christ is received as Jesus the Lord.*—Jesus is the name by which He was known among men, and points out how completely He has identified Himself with humanity as the Saviour. "It behoved Him to be made like unto His

brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." He is also Lord, the supreme Governor in all spheres, in nature, providence, and grace. To receive Jesus aright, He must be trusted as the Saviour, able to save to the uttermost, acknowledged as the Sovereign and universal Ruler, and homage and obedience rendered to His rightful authority. Our reception of Christ does not place us beyond the reach of law, but creates in us the capacity for rendering an intelligent and cheerful obedience to its holy requirements.

3. *Christ is received by an act of faith.*—To receive Christ is to believe in Him; and faith in Christ is simply the reception of Christ: the only way of receiving Him into the soul is by faith. The soul accepts, not only the testimony concerning Christ, whether furnished by Himself or by His witnesses, but accepts Christ Himself. The great, final object of faith that saves is Christ, and all testimony is valuable only as it brings us to Him. The sin-tossed spirit finds rest and peace only as it reposes, not in an abstract truth, but in a person—not in love as the law of the moral universe, but in a person who is Himself love.

II. **The Christian life is governed by the law of Christ.**—"So walk ye in Him" (ver. 6). The word "walk" expresses the general conduct of man and the process of progression in the formation of individual character. The will of Christ, as indicated in His character, words, spirit, and example, is the ruling principle in the life of the believer.

1. *To walk in Christ implies a recognition of Him in all things.*—In everything that constitutes our daily life—business, domestic relations, social engagements, friendships, pleasures, cares, and trials—we may trace the presence of Christ and recognise His rule. Everywhere, on road, or rail, or sea—in all seasons of distress or joy, of poverty or wealth, of disturbance or rest—we may be conscious of the encompassing and regulating presence of Christ Jesus the Lord.

2. *To walk in Christ implies a complete consecration to Him.*—He has the supreme claim upon our devotion and service: "We are not our own; we are bought with a price." Our life consists in serving Him: "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord." The best of everything we possess should be cheerfully offered to Him. Carpeaux, the celebrated French sculptor, was kept in comparative retirement for some time before his death by a long and painful illness. One Sunday, as he was being drawn to church, he was accosted by a certain prince, who exclaimed, "Carpeaux, I have good news for you! You have been advanced in the Legion of Honour. Here is the *rosette d'officier.*" The emaciated sculptor smiled and replied, "Thank you, my dear friend. It is the good God who shall first have the noble gift." Saying which, he approached the altar, put the *rosette* in his button-hole, and reverentially knelt down to pray.

3. *To walk in Christ implies a continual approximation to the highest life in Him.*—The Christian can rise no higher than to be most like Christ. The highest ambition of the apostle was to be "found in Him." Life in Him is a perpetual progress in personal purity and ever-deepening felicity. Our interest in the vast future is intensified by the Christ-inspired hope that we shall be for ever virtually united to Him, that we shall delight in ever-changing visions of His matchless glory, that we shall be like Him, and reflect and illustrate the splendour of His all-perfect character. Every triumph over sin is a substantial advance towards this glorious future destiny.

III. **The Christian life is supported and established by faith in fully declared truth.**—1. *There is the idea of stability.* The believer is rooted in Christ, as a tree planted in firm, immovable soil; he is built up in Christ, as an edifice on a sure foundation; and in both senses, as a tree and as a building, he must be established in the truth which has been demonstrated to him as divine and all-authoritative. It is not enough to preserve the appearance of an

external walk in Christ; but the roots of our faith must be worked into Him, and the superstructure of holiness rest on Him as the only foundation laid in Zion. The soul thus firmly established will survive the heaviest storms of adversity and the most furious assaults of error.

2. *There is the idea of progress.*—Walking implies a continual advance to a given destination; a tree is planted in order to grow; the building, after the foundation is laid, rises to completion. The word "built" is in the present tense, and describes a work in actual process. So the believer, having become attached to the only foundation that is laid, which is Christ Jesus, is ever rising in conformity with the foundation and with the outlines of that grand spiritual edifice of which Christ is the pattern and glory. Faith is the cement that fastens one part of the building to the other; but faith as a living, active principle also admits of increase. With respect to every individual effort after a higher spiritual life, according to our faith it is done unto us.

IV. **The Christian life has its most appropriate outflow in thanksgiving.**—"Abounding therein with thanksgiving" (ver. 7). The end of all human conduct is thanksgiving. It should be expressed in every word, and appear in every action. Life should be a ceaseless, ever-abounding outflow of gratitude. We should never forget the magnitude of the blessings we have received, the wealth of mercies now offered to us, and the source whence they all issue. A thankful remembrance of past benefits cheers and strengthens the heart under difficulties, and disposes the bounteous Donor to confer further benefits. There is nothing in which Christians are more deficient than in a devout and heartily expressed gratitude. Gratitude expands our sympathies for the race. What a triumph of disinterested thankfulness was that of the invalid who, though confined to his room, "thanked God for the sunshine for others to enjoy"! The spirit of Christian progress is one of unceasing thanksgiving.

Lessons.—1. *The Christian life is divinely bestowed.* 2. *The Christian life is divinely sustained.* 3. *The reality of the Christian life is evidenced by effusive and practical gratitude.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 6, 7. *Retrospection the Basis of Progress.*

I. **The Christian consciousness in its apprehension of Christ.**—1. *There are two opposing theories prevalent on the person of Christ—the rationalistic and the revealed.* The one rules out His Godhead; the other is the basis of the Christian faith. 2. *Two systems of theology, widely distinct from each other, are dependent on these theories.* The one puts man at its centre, and is wholly human; the other enthrones God, and is essentially divine. 3. *There is only one Christ, one faith, one salvation.* 4. *It is within the one or the other of these two systems that we must posit our decisions.*

II. **The Christian consciousness in its reception of Christ.**—1. *Faith receives the whole Christ.* 2. *Christ asks and gets the whole man.* 3. *The life of faith, as embodied in the moralities of Christian living, is thus provided for and follows this consecrating act.*

III. **The Christian consciousness in its subjection to Christ.**—1. *The sphere of the lordship of Christ is the human mind.* 2. *The claim of this lordship is absolute.* 3. *The mind is free and unconstrained in its surrender to the authority of Christ.*—*John Burton.*

Ver. 6. *Moral Imitation.*

I. **The text assumes that man possesses the faculty of imitation.**

II. **He requires an example to imitate, and that example is Christ.**

III. **A model must be seen to be imitated, so Christ has presented Himself to us for that purpose.**—*W. Frazer.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 8.

The Marks of a False Philosophy.

Philosophy plays an important part in the investigation and discovery of truth. The use of the word arose out of the humility of Pythagoras, who called himself a lover of wisdom. The noblest intellects of all ages have been devoted to the pursuit of the same coveted prize. Philosophy represents the highest effort of the human intellect in its search after knowledge. It explores and tests phenomena in the realm of physics and of morals, and discovers the subtle laws by which those phenomena are governed. It elevates man to his true rank in creation, and teaches that he must be estimated, not by his physical relation to the outward world, but by the sublime endowments of his mind, into which it is the special function of philosophy to inquire. The philosophic mood never reaches its highest development till it is Christianised. The apostle does not stigmatise all philosophy as in vain; he knew the value of a true philosophy, and in his estimation the Christian religion was the embodiment of the highest philosophy. But he warned the Colossians against a false philosophy that was deceptive in its pretentions and deadly in its influence.

I. **A false philosophy is known by its profitless speculations.**—The absence of both preposition and article in the second clause shows that "vain deceit" describes and qualifies philosophy. A celebrated Roman sophist summed up his deliberate judgment on the efforts of the learned in the painful search after wisdom in these words: "The human mind wanders in a diseased delirium, and it is therefore not surprising that there is no possible folly which philosophers, at one time or another, have propounded as a lesson of wisdom." When the most highly cultured intellects have been gravely occupied with tricks of magic, the casting of nativities, the random guesses of soothsaying, and the pretended marvels of a mystic astrology; when the best of life has been spent in discussing transcendental questions as to the eternity of matter, fate, the mortality of the soul, the worship of angels and their mature endowments and habits, and in definitional hair-splitting as to what constitutes the chief good of man; when the truest and best discoveries of human reason are used to disparage divine revelation and discredit the absolute authority of saving truth—then philosophy falsifies its name, frustrates its lofty mission, and degenerates into vain, empty, profitless speculations. The student of the theories and contradictions of certain philosophic schools may begin with extravagant expectations, only to end in chagrin and despondency. The errors which assailed the Colossian Church were a mixture of the Oriental system of Zoroaster with Judaism, and with the crude, half-comprehended truths of Christianity. It was a mongrel system of philosophy, containing the germs of what afterwards developed into an advanced Gnosticism, and became the prolific source of many forms of heresy. Its abettors became "vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise, they became fools."

II. **A false philosophy is known by its purely human origin.**—"After the tradition of men."

1. *The human mind is limited.*—The stream can never rise higher than its source; so the wisdom that comes from man is necessarily bounded by the range of his mental powers. The human mind cannot penetrate far into any subject without discovering there is a point beyond which all is darkness and uncertainty. It is impossible for the circumscribed and unaided mind of man to construct a philosophy that shall be universally true and beneficial. Tillotson has said: "Philosophy has given us several plausible rules for attaining peace and tranquillity of mind, but they fall very much short in bringing men to it."

2. *All human knowledge is imperfect.*—"If any man think that he knoweth

anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." The *traditions* of men are the accumulation of mere human theories transmitted from age to age until they have assumed the pretensions of a philosophy, imposing a number of uninspired and unauthorised observances and austerities. The imperfection of human knowledge is not obliterated but aggravated by its antiquity. A philosophy that builds solely on man is baseless and full of danger.

III. **A false philosophy is known by its undue exaltation of elementary principles.**—"After the rudiments of the world." The source of the false teaching against which the apostle warned was found in human tradition, and its subject-matter was made up of "the rudiments of the world"—the most elementary instruction conveyed by external and material objects, suited only to man's infancy in the world. The legal rights and ceremonies instituted by Moses are evidently referred to here; they were the first rough elements of an introductory religion fit only for children—shadows at best of great and deeper truths to which they were intended to lead, and yet, by the tendency of the soul to cling to the outward, gendering to bondage. "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements [rudiments] of the world. But now, after that ye have known God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements?" (Gal. iv. 3-10). The apostle shows the Colossians that, in Christ, they had been exalted into the sphere of the Spirit, and that it would be a sad retrogression to plunge again into the midst of the sensuous and ceremonial. A true philosophy, while starting necessarily with elementary principles, conducts its votaries into a pathway of increasing knowledge and of spiritual exaltation and liberty. A false philosophy fetters the mind by exaggerating the importance of first principles and insisting on their eternal obligation.

IV. **A false philosophy is known by its Christlessness.**—"And not after Christ." Christ is neither the author nor the substance of its teaching; not the author, for its advocates rely on human traditions; not the substance, for they ignore Christ by the substitution of external ceremonies and angelic mediators. Such a method of philosophising may be after the Jewish fanatics, after the Pythagoreans or Platonists, after Moses and his abrogated legalism; but it is *not after Christ.* There is no affinity between Christ and their inventions; the substances cannot amalgamate. As it is impossible, by any process, to convert a baser metal into gold, so is it impossible to elevate a vain philosophy into Christianity. All true saving knowledge must be after—*i.e.* according to—Christ. It is in Him alone the deepest wants of man's nature can be met and satisfied. Any philosophy, though championed by the most brilliant intellects, that tends to lure the soul from Christ, that puts anything in the place of Him, or depreciates in any way our estimate of His glorious character, is false and full of peril.

V. **A false philosophy is known by its destructive influence.**—"Lest any man spoil you." The meaning of the word "spoil" is very full and significant: it is not simply to despoil—to strip off—but to carry away as spoil, just as the four kings, after the battle in the vale of Siddim, plundered the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and bore away as spoil the people and all their property and victuals (Gen. xiv. 12-16). The Colossians had been rescued from the bondage of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of light; they were settled there as free and happy citizens; and now there was danger lest they should be tampered with by some crafty marauder, seized and carried away as booty, and fall into a worse state than their former slavery. There are worse losses than loss of property, or even of children: man is never so grievously spoiled as when his soul is debased and robbed by the errors of wicked seducers. Men who have contemptuously given up the Bible as a book of fables, lost their peace of mind, wrecked their moral character, and blasted their prospects for ever, began their downward career by embracing the apparently harmless ideas of a false philosophy.

"The thief cometh not," saith Jesus, "but to steal, to kill, and to destroy; I"—the infallible Teacher, the incorruptible Guardian, the inexhaustible Life-giver—"am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

VI. **Against a false philosophy the Church must be faithfully warned.**—"Beware."

1. *Because it is seductive in its pretensions.*—It seeks to refine and elevate the plain gospel by a show of lofty intellectualism; it dignifies some particular religious rite into an unjustifiable importance; it elaborates a ritual marvellous for spectacular display and musical effect; it flatters the pride and ministers to the corruption of the human heart; and, stealing through the avenue of the charmed senses, gains an imperious mastery over the whole man.

2. *Because it is baneful in its effect.*—It not only misrepresents and distorts the truth, but injures the faculties of the soul by which truth is obtained and kept. It darkens the understanding, pollutes the conscience, and weakens the will. It robs man of his dearest treasure, and offers in exchange a beggarly system of crude, unsatisfying speculations. The soul is goaded into a restless search after rest, and cursed with its non-attainment.

Lessons.—1. *Human philosophy is essentially defective.* 2. *The true philosophy is the highest knowledge of Christ.* 3. *All philosophy that weans the soul from Christ is false, and should be shunned.*

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

The Divine Fulness of Christ a Pledge of the Believer's Perfection.

Christianity is the true philosophy. Here are its profoundest depths, its loftiest themes, its most substantial discoveries. The philosophy that is not after Christ is vain and misleading. It was a false conception of the Colossian heresy that the divine energy was dispersed among several spiritual agencies. The apostle boldly declares that in Christ dwells the whole πλήρωμα, the entire fulness of the Deity, and that it is in vain to seek for spiritual life in communion with inferior creatures.

I. **The divine fulness of Christ.**—1. *In Christ is the fulness of the Deity.* "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead" (ver. 9). A small text, but a great subject. These words contain the sublimest truth in the narrowest compass. Fulness is a term used to signify all that anything contains. Hence we read of the fulness of the earth, the fulness of the sea, and that the Church is Christ's body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. In Christ inhere all the perfections, attributes, and qualities that essentially constitute the divine nature—power, wisdom, eternity, self-existence, omnipresence, truth, love, holiness. The deities of the heathen never pretended to possess more than a few divine attributes, some portion of divinity. But Christ contains in Himself the totality of divine powers and excellencies.

2. *The fulness of the Deity in Christ is present and permanent.*—"Dwelleth." The present tense is used. It is not as a transient gleam or as a brilliant display to serve a temporary purpose, but as an ever-present and unchanging reality. Mystery of mysteries! the body that hungered and thirsted, that bled and died, that rose and ascended on high, is still the temple of illimitable Deity! The manifestations of God through angels and prophets were brief and partial. The Shekinah, or visible glory, that hovered over the ark of the covenant was a symbol only of a present deity, and disappeared as mysteriously as it came. But in Christ the transcendent fulness of the Godhead finds its permanent home, never to depart, never to vanish.

3. *The fulness of the Deity in Christ has a visible embodiment.*—"Bodily." In the person of Christ every moral perfection of the Godhead was enshrined, and brought within the range of human vision. He presented and proved the fact of the divine existence. He embodied and declared the divine spirituality. He delineated the divine disposition and character in the days of His flesh. Gleams of the divine nature occasionally broke forth. "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of God." And now, from that subtle, glorified human form of our exalted Mediator, the splendour of the Deity rays forth, filling the universe with light and glory and joy. In Christ the Godhead is revealed, not as a changing, shadowy phantasm, but as a positive, substantial reality.

II. **The supreme authority of Christ.**—"Which is the Head of all principality and power" (ver. 10).

1. *Angels are the principalities and powers of the universe.*—They are called *spirits* to express their nature, and *angels* to designate their office as messengers sent by God. They are called *sons of God*, to indicate their lofty relationship; *cherubim*, because of their composite nature, and because they are placed under the presence of Jehovah, whose moving throne they appear to draw; *seraphim*, because of their burning ardour in executing the commands of God; *stars of the morning*, to set forth their brightness; *a flaming fire*, because of the fierceness and celerity with which they carry out the vengeance of Heaven; and they are called *principalities* and *powers* on account of their exalted rank and superior endowments.

2. *Among the principalities and powers of the universe Christ has supreme authority.*—He is the Head of all angelic hierarchies. He called them into being. He endows them with vast intelligence. He designates their rank. He controls their beneficent ministries. He fills the circle of their bliss. To worship angels, or to seek their mediation in the affairs of the soul, is not only gross idolatry, but an insufferable insult to the fulness of the Deity in Christ.

III. **The believer's fulness in Christ.**—"And ye are complete in Him" (ver. 10).

1. *In Christ is the inspiration of the believer's life.*—The soul finds its true life by believing on the Son of God. "He that hath the Son hath life." In ourselves we are like empty vessels; but in Christ we are filled up to the brim. As there is an original and divine fulness of the Godhead in Christ, so there is a derived fulness communicated to us. Every advance in Christian experience, every aspiration after a more exalted spiritual tone, every yearning of the soul after clearer light, every struggle for victory over self and sin, is prompted and accelerated by the impetuous inflow of the divine life.

2. *In Christ is the perfect ideal of the believer's character.*—Christ has exalted human nature. He took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. He has shown what human nature can become, and what it can do. In Him we have the illustrious pattern after which our souls are to be fashioned and rounded off into a full-orbed completeness. "Christ is the mirror that glasses God's image before us, and the spirit is the plastic force within that transfers and photographs that image; and so, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

3. *In Christ is the interminable bliss of the believer's future.*—The present life is a training for the future. The more it is in harmony with the will of Christ the happier will it be. Every attempt, amid the multiform relations of life, to do our duty in a Christly spirit, is bringing us into closer sympathy with Christ, and preparing us for a joyous life with Him hereafter. The apostle expressed the condition of the highest conceivable bliss to the believer in the words, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Lessons.—1. *Christ is essentially divine.* 2. *There is an ineffable fulness of salvation in Christ.* 3. *All secondary mediators between God and man are superfluous.* 4. *The soul is complete in Christ only as it believes in Him.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 9, 10. *A Presentation of Two Great Truths.*

I. **That all Christianity centres in Christ.**

II. **That union to Christ makes the soul independent of others.**—*Dykes.*

Ver. 9. *The Fulness of Christ.*

I. **Christ is full of the power of God.**

II. **The love of God.**

III. **The grace of God.**

IV. **The faithfulness of God.**

V. **The purpose of God to punish sin.**—*Preacher's Magazine.*

Ver. 10. *The Completing of the Soul.*

I. **We are made complete in Christ by inspirations.**

II. **We have ideas and ideals in Christ.**

III. **We are set in a various scheme of relations that we may have a training in virtues equally various and be perfected in them and by means of them.**—*Bushnell.*

The Believer Complete in Christ.

I. **Complete in Him with respect to the work which He hath already performed.**—1. *His obedience and atonement were precisely what God Himself had prescribed.* 2. *That He obeyed and atoned, we have the perfect evidence of observation and testimony.* He Himself declared, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." "It is finished." To this the Father and the Spirit have expressly borne testimony: by signs and wonders; His resurrection; His ascension; the descent of the Spirit; conversions; the glorification of His people. 3. *Into His righteousness thus perfect the believer is admitted.*

II. **Complete in Him with respect to the work which He is now performing.**—1. *Interceding in heaven.* 2. *Ruling on earth,* and thus giving grace and affording protection.

III. **Complete in Him with respect to the work which He is hereafter to perform.**—1. *As the Resurrection.* 2. *As the Judge.* 3. *As the Glorifier.* 4. *As the Consummation and Communicator of eternal blessedness.*—*Stewart.*

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

Christian Circumcision.

There were two principal errors lying at the root of the heresy that was doing so much damage at Colossæ. One was the theological error of substituting inferior and created angelic mediators for the divine Head Himself. The other was a practical error, in insisting upon ritual and ascetic observances as the foundation of moral teaching. Thus their theological speculations and ethical code alike were at fault. Both errors flowed from a common source—the false conception that evil resides in matter, a fruitful source of many fatal heresies. Some contended the Colossians could not be complete in Christ without submitting to the Jewish rite of circumcision; but the apostle showed that they were the subjects of a superior circumcision.

1. **Christian circumcision is inward and spiritual.**—"Ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands" (ver. 11). The hand-wrought circumcision of the Jews was simply an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. This is abundantly clear in the language of the Old Testament: "No stranger uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into My

sanctuary." "The Lord Thy God will circumcise thine heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and all thy soul." The argument of the apostle is that the Colossians had secured all the spiritual results aimed at in the ancient rite, and that by a better circumcision, even that made without hands, by the spiritual and almighty power of Christ, so that it was unnecessary for them or any other Gentiles to submit to the abrogated Hebraic ordinance. The true circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter (Rom. ii. 28, 29).

II. **Christian circumcision is complete.**—"In putting off the body of the sins of the flesh" (ver. 11); or, as Bengel translates, *putting off the body of the sins*—that is to say, *the flesh*. Manual circumcision, according to the law of Moses, was the cutting away of only a small part of the flesh. But the true spiritual circumcision consists in putting off, renouncing, and casting away with disgust the *whole body* of our corrupt nature—the entire fleshly principle. The whole bulk of sin is fitly compared to a *body*, because of the weight of guilt there is in it (Rom. vii. 24), and the soul is completely compassed by it, as it is with our natural body (Gen. vi. 5). When the heart is circumcised, the total mass of sin is put off, as the porter puts off his burden, the beggar his rags, the master his false servant, and the serpent its skin. Old things pass away; all things become new.

III. **Christian circumcision is divine.**—"By the circumcision of Christ" (ver. 11). It is wrought, without hands, by the inward, invisible power of the divine Spirit of Christ. It supersedes the external form of the circumcision of the law, and fulfils all its spiritual designs in a far more perfect manner than even the spiritually-minded Jew could adequately conceive. What can never be effected by the moral law, by external, ascetic ceremonies, or by philosophic speculations, is accomplished by the circumcision of Christ. The whole body of sin is mortified, the soul is quickened and renewed, and brought into the possession of the highest moral perfection.

IV. **Christian circumcision is realised by the thorough identification of the believer with Christ in His death and resurrection.**—"Buried with Him, wherein also ye are risen with Him" (ver. 12). Burial implies previous death; and to secure the true circumcision we must be spiritually identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It is the familiar teaching of the New Testament that he who believes in Christ is said to die with Him, to be buried with Him, and to rise with Him (ver. 13; Rom. vi. 11; Eph. ii. 5). A circumcised heart, a new nature, cannot be obtained by mere human effort, by stern resolutions, painful processes of self-mortification, or by the most advanced and rigorous mental culture. It is secured only by a complete, vital union and incorporation with Christ, and a sympathetic participation with Him in all He has done and suffered. With Christ the believer enters the grave where the vast body of sin dies, and is buried; and with Christ he emerges into a new and heavenlier life that transforms the soul into a diviner beauty, and fills it with unutterable rapture and melodious praise.

V. **Christian circumcision is wrought in the soul by a spiritual baptism.**—"Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him" (ver. 12). Baptism by water, like legal circumcision, is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. But it does not appear that there is any allusion here to the ordinance of baptism. The leading ideas and figures used in these two verses refer to spiritual realities: the death, burial, and resurrection, the circumcision without hands, and the putting off of the body of the flesh, are all spiritual; and the baptism is evidently of the same character. It is by the baptism of the Spirit—the quickening and renewing power of the Holy Ghost—that the soul is so united to and identified with Christ that the believer may be

said to be buried and to rise with Him. It is possible to die with Christ and to rise with Him without being baptised with water; but it is impossible to do either without the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Spiritual baptism is the grave of the old man and the birth of the new. As he sinks beneath the baptismal waters, the believer buries there all his corrupt affections and past sins; as he emerges thence, he rises regenerate, quickened to new hopes and a new life.

VI. **Christian circumcision is received by faith.**—"Through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead" (ver. 12). Faith is not a natural production of the human heart. It is a divine gift, and is bestowed on man by a divine operation. Man *can* believe because God has given him the power to believe. No unbeliever can receive the baptism that effects the spiritual resurrection. The faith specially referred to is to be fixed on the power of God as exerted and displayed in the resurrection of Christ from the tomb. The same power is employed in that mysterious baptismal process by which the soul throws off its mass of moral vileness and rises into newness of life. Faith opens every gateway of the soul, so that it gratefully welcomes and exults in the transforming operations of the divine energy.

Lessons.—1. *All external ordinances are powerless to change the heart.* 2. *The true circumcision is accomplished by the baptism of the Holy Ghost.* 3. *To realise the renewing power of God faith is indispensable.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 11. *The True Circumcision—*

I. Is not an outward rite, but an inward change.

II. Is an excision of the body of sin by our union with Christ, who has conquered sin.

III. Is not an external observance, but a spiritual experience and a holy life.

Ver. 12. *The True Baptism—*

I. Is spiritual regeneration.

II. Is being buried and raised again with Christ.

III. Is secured by an active, realising faith in the power of God.

IV. Renders circumcision and all outward rites valueless as means of salvation.

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

The Transition from Death to Life.

In relation to man, the physical order is a descent from life to death, the spiritual order an ascent from death to life. The soul of man is held captive in the dark and dismal prison-house of sin, and the divine law—at once its judge and gaoler—has declared its condemnation to death. The great Mediator offers Himself a ransom for human sin. He is accepted. The sentence of condemnation is cancelled, and spiritual liberty proclaimed.

I. **That the natural condition of humanity is one of moral and spiritual death.**—1. *Man is in a condition of spiritual insensibility.* "You, being dead in your sins" (ver. 13). The dead know not anything. They are as unconscious as the dust in the midst of which they slumber. The sweetest sounds or the brightest scenes appeal in vain to the locked-up senses. This figure strikingly depicts the moral condition of man. The soul may be keenly alive to the relations and interests of the outer world, and at the same time dead to the grandest spiritual realities. He is insensible to the character and claims of God, to the sublimest truths, to the most ravishing prospects. With faculties to appreciate all that is lovely in nature and wonderful in art, he is insensible and unresponsive to the highest moral beauty.

2. *Man is in a condition of moral corruption.*—"And the uncircumcision of your flesh" (ver. 13). Death unbinds the forces that brace up the body in life and health, and leaves it a prey to the ever-active power of corruption. The *flesh* is the carnal principle—the old corrupt nature; and its uncircumcision indicates that it has not been cut off, mortified, or conquered. It is the loathsome, putrid fruit of a nature spiritually dead—the outworkings of a wicked, unrenewed heart, through all the channels of unchecked appetites and passions—moral putrescence fattening on itself. No description of sin can surpass the revolting spectacle of its own self-registered results.

3. *Man is in a condition of condemnation.*—(1) The divine ordinances record an indictment against the transgressor. "The handwriting of ordinances that was against us" (ver. 14). A *handwriting* imports what any one writes with his own hand, and is usually applied to a note of hand, a bond, or obligation, as having the signature of the debtor or contracting party. The primary reference in the terms used is to the Jews, who might be said to have signed the contract when they bound themselves, by a curse, to observe all the enactments of the law (Deut. xxvii. 14-26). *Ordinances*, though referring primarily to the Mosaic ordinances, include all forms of positive decrees (ordinances) in which moral or social principles are embodied or religious duties defined. Man everywhere is under law, written or unwritten; and he is morally obligated to obey it. That law has been universally violated, and its ordinances and sanctions are against us. We are involved in legal condemnation; we owe to God what we can never pay. (2) The divine ordinances are hostile towards the transgressor. "Which was contrary to us" (ver. 14). We are often painfully reminded of our broken bond, as the debtor is often distressingly reminded of his undischarged obligation. Our peace is disturbed, our conscience troubled, our prospects darkened. The sense of condemnation pursues us in every part of life, and haunts us with visions of terrible vengeance to come.

II. **That the believer is raised into a condition of spiritual life.**—1. *Spiritual life begins in the consciousness of liberty.* "Having forgiven you all trespasses" (ver. 13). Sin enthrals the soul in an intolerable bondage, and smites it with a deathly blow. There is no return to life until liberty is bestowed. Forgiveness confers that liberty. Pardon is the point at which spiritual life begins. The sense of liberty is the first glad thrill in the soul of a new and nobler life. The pardon is ample; it is all-comprehensive—having forgiven you *all* trespasses. Every legal barrier is removed. All guilt is cancelled. Every stain is purged away. Every vestige of corruption disappears. The divine mercy triumphs in the prompt, generous, loving, full forgiveness of sins.

2. *Spiritual life implies a freedom from all condemnation.*—(1) The indictment recorded in the divine ordinances is cancelled and abolished. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross" (ver. 14). Every assurance is given to the trembling believer that his guilt is pardoned and his condemnation removed. The handwriting is blotted out—as it were, cross-strokes are drawn through it; and that all suspicion it may again become legible, may be allayed, it is added, "and took it out of the way"; it is entirely removed. But lest, haply, it should again be found and produced, it is declared—it is destroyed, torn, nailed to the cross, and so made utterly useless ever to witness anything against the believer. "Now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held" (Rom. vii. 6). The handwriting against us is removed and destroyed by the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross. There we behold the cancelled sentence torn and rent by the very nails that pierced the sacred body of the world's Redeemer. (2) Freedom from condemnation is effected by the cross. "His cross." Much as the doctrine of salvation through the vicarious sufferings of

Christ may be misunderstood and despised, it is the only method by which pardon can be bestowed, condemnation removed, and spiritual life imparted. "Christ hath reedeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us."

III. **That the transition of the soul from death to spiritual life is a divine work.**—"You hath He quickened together with Him" (ver. 13). God only can raise the dead. He who first fashioned us in His own image, who raised from the dead Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, rescues man from the gloomy domain of spiritual death, and inspires him with a new and holier life. It is a life of blessed union with the divine. Its activities are spontaneous and Godward in their tendencies. It has the power of growth and endless development. Its aspirations are the purest and noblest. It is intensely individual. It is the movement of the divine in the sphere of the human, not defacing or destroying the human, but exalting and perfecting its worthiest traits.

Lessons.—1. *All men are dead in sin.* 2. *Law condemns but cannot deliver.* 3. *Pardon of sin is the gateway of spiritual life.* 4. *Pardon is obtained only by looking to the cross.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 13. *Death and Spiritual Life.*

I. **Man by sin is spiritually dead and disabled from exercising spiritual acts.**

II. **Man is quickened into spiritual life by virtue of the resurrection of Christ.**

III. **Spiritual life is obtainable only by the pardon of sin.**

Ver. 14. *The Handwriting of Ordinances—*

I. **Describes our condemnation.**

II. **Must be cancelled in order to pardon.**

III. **Cancelled by the sufferings on the cross.**

IV. **Is blotted out against us when we accept the Crucified.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 15.

The Triumph of the Cross.

The apostle has shown the worthlessness of the Jewish ceremonies and the galling tyranny of their yoke. He has exposed the emptiness of the philosophy that was of human fabrication, with its illusive theories about angel mediators, its vast accretions of conflicting traditions, and its intolerable impositions. He has declared that they are all transfixed to the cross—torn, lacerated, illegible, cancelled—and exhibited there as a spectacle for the perpetual consolation and assurance of the believer. And now the apostle, rising with the grandeur of his theme, compares the scene of the cross to the splendid triumph of a Roman general, in which the captives taken in battle were led in gorgeous procession through the city as substantial trophies of the victor.

I. **The triumph of the cross was over the powers of evil.**—"Principalities and Powers."

1. *The existence of evil is a painful fact.*—We meet with it everywhere and in everything. It mars the beauty of external creation, and loads it with a burden of unutterable woe. It flings its shadow over the brightest sky, transforms the music of life into a doleful monotone, and translates the softest zephyrs into sighs. It impregnates man's moral nature, deflects the purest principles, shatters the noblest powers, arrests the loftiest aspirations, and drags the soul down to the lowest hell.

2. *Evil is embodied in invisible and potent personalities.*—They are here called *principalities* because of their excellency, their deep penetration, vast knowledge, and exalted station. They are called *powers* because of their ability, the mighty influence they can wield, and the terrible havoc they can work. Their dominion extends over the whole realm of sin. They exist in vast numbers (2 Pet. iv. 2; Jude 6), but they are inspired and guided by one great master-spirit—the prince of the power of the air. They are animated and bound together by one spirit—a spirit of bitter hatred and savage hostility towards God, and of contemptuous scorn for His authority. They are eager to obey the slightest behest of their malignant leader.

> "He spake: and to confirm his words outflew
> Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
> Of mighty cherubim: the sudden blaze
> Far round illumined hell: highly they raged
> Against the Highest, and fierce with grasped arms
> Clashed on their sounding shields the din of war,
> Hurling defiance towards the vault of heaven."

These hosts of evil spirits are the great foes of man with which he has incessantly to contend (Eph. vi. 12). The struggle would be hopeless had not Christ defeated them.

II. **The triumph of the cross was achieved after severe conflict.**—"Having spoiled."

1. *The conflict was continuous.*—It was fought from the earliest period between Satan and man, and the day was lost. The woeful issues of that conquest are with us to-day. The battle has been raging ever since. The enmity existing between the serpent and the seed of the woman is still active. The symbols and foreshadowings of the great strife appeared on many occasions during the Mosaic period. But when Christ assumed our humanity and stepped upon the field as the great Captain of our salvation, the conflict reached its climax.

2. *The conflict was fierce.*—Hosts of demons swarmed around the solitary Warrior, and with incredible fury sought to gain a victory over the human nature He had assumed. Again and again they rushed to the attack; but each fresh assault ended with a new defeat. In the wilderness He was tempted by Satan; but the arch-tempter was compelled to retire, baffled and conquered. Through the voice of His chief disciple the temptation was renewed, and He was urged to decline His appointed sufferings and death (Matt. xvi. 23). But Satan was again foiled.

3. *The conflict was deadly.*—Then came the final hour—the great crisis when the power of darkness made itself felt, when the prince of this world threw his last fatal shaft and asserted his tyranny (Luke xxii. 53; John xii. 30). The closing act in the conflict began with the agony of Gethsemane; it ended with the cross of Calvary. The Son of God expires on the accursed tree. But, lo! strange reversal of all human conflicts—the moment of apparent defeat is the moment of victory! By dying Christ has conquered death, and wrested from the enemy his most potent weapon of terror. The principalities and powers of evil, that clung around the humanity of Christ like a fatal Nessus tunic, were *spoiled*—torn off and cast aside for ever. Evil assailed the great Redeemer from without, but never penetrated Him as it does humanity. In the act of dying the crucified One stripped off and flung to the ground the great potentates of evil never more to be in the ascendant.

III. **The triumph of the cross was signal and complete.**—1. *It was signal.* "He made a show of them openly." The overthrow of the principalities and powers of evil was boldly declared to the universe. They were declared to be liars, traitors, deceivers, usurpers, and murderers! It was not a private but a public victory, in which the universe was interested, and in which all men may

well rejoice. The victory of mankind is involved in the victory of Christ. In His cross we too are divested of the poisonous, clinging garments of temptation, sin, and death—we spoil, strip off, put away from us the powers of evil, and are liberated from the dominion of the flesh.

2. *It was complete.*—"Triumphing over them in it." Christ proved Himself on the cross the Conqueror of death and hell. Here the paradox of the Crucifixion is placed in the strongest light—triumph in helplessness, glory in shame, the vanquished become the conqueror. The gloom of the convict's gibbet is transformed into the splendour of the victor's chariot. In the cross we see the greatest triumph of our Immanuel—the law fulfilled; God's moral government vindicated; death robbed of its prey; Satan, "the prince of this world" cast out; principalities and powers dragged in procession as captives; a show of them boldly made; the imprisoned world set free; and the final victory over every enemy assured.

Lessons.—1. *Christ has conquered the powers of evil.* 2. *To the believer ultimate victory is certain.* 3. *Keep up a brave heart in the fiercest conflict.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 16, 17.

The Ceremonial and the Real in Religion.

After dealing with the speculative theories so busily propagated by the false teachers at Colossæ, the apostle descends from the height of his lofty argument, and with incomparable force sweeps away the whole group of errors which overrated an excessive ritualism and insisted on a rigorous asceticism. The existence of the ceremonial in religion is a confession of the imperfection of our nature; and the more rudimentary the ceremonial, the lower it supposes our condition. The ceremonial foreshadows the real, and is intended to help in attaining it. In the nature of things, therefore, the ceremonial is but temporary. When it puts man in possession of the real it vanishes. The shadow is absorbed in the substance. To compel man to find salvation in the ceremonial, when he already possesses the real, is a retrogression and an injustice. The liberty of the gospel places the believer above the slavery of external ordinances, and furnishes him with a law—the law of a christianised conscience—as to their use or neglect.

I. **That the ceremonial in religion can form no just basis for individual condemnation.**—"Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat," etc. (ver. 16). The Mosaic law enforced certain injunctions concerning eating and drinking. It gave minute directions as to the animals that were to be eaten, making a distinction between the clean and the unclean. As to drinking, the priests were strictly forbidden the use of wine on the eve of solemn public duty; and the vow of the Nazarites required entire abstinence from the fruit of the vine. The tendency of the Jews was to multiply these distinctions and prohibitions, and to exalt them into undue importance. The reference to special days embraces the collective periodical feasts and sacred seasons of the Levitical ritual—the yearly, monthly, and weekly celebrations. The term *holy day* would include the festivals of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles respectively. The *new moon* alludes to the monthly celebrations mentioned (Num. x. 10, xxviii. 11). The *Sabbath days* refer to the weekly solemnities and services of the seventh day. The Jews assumed that the obligation of these regulations was permanent, and their observance essential to the salvation of the Christian believer. The gospel teaches that the observance or non-observance of these ceremonial rites is no just ground for judging each other. We are not justified in condemning any one for neglecting them, or to think any better of one who reverently observes

them. The essence of religion does not consist in the outward form, but in the inward spirit—not in the ceremonial, but in the real. "Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (ver. 17).

II. **That the ceremonial in religion is typical of the real.**—"Which are a shadow of things to come" (ver. 17). Ceremonies have their place in the culture of mankind, and in their legitimate sphere they are important. They are adapted to the infant stage in the development of the race. They sketch out the bold, rough outlines of truths that are in a half-formed, embryotic state. They are shadows projected across the disc of our mental vision—of grand realities which are ever advancing into clearer view. They are typical of the existence and certain manifestation of deeper and unchangeable truths. They are predictive of things to come. The great yearly festival of the Passover typified the forgiveness of sins by the shedding of the precious blood of Christ. The Pentecost, or feast of the firstfruits, sets forth the sustenance and ample provision God has made for the soul. The feast of the Tabernacles was a significant reminder of God's providential guidance and fatherly care of human life. The new moon, or first day of the month, with its usual service, impressed on the minds of the people the truth that Jehovah, the Ruler of the seasons, was the God of providence as well as of creation. The weekly Sabbath, with its grateful rest, was expressly instituted to commemorate the rest of God after the exercise of His creative energy. Then the ordinary sacrifices were doubled, and the shewbread renewed, to indicate that God is the source and sustenance of our life. And so the whole Mosaic law was a type and presage of the gospel. The spiritually enlightened look through the outward and visible symbol to the great truth signified. The ceremonial is valuable only as it conducts to the real.

III. **That the ceremonial in religion is abolished and rendered nugatory by the real.**—"But the body is of Christ" (ver. 17). When the substance appears, the shadow is swallowed up. As the shadows are to the body, so were the types and ceremonies of the law to Christ. They were figures of evangelical blessings; but the truth, the reality, and abiding substance of them are found in the person, work, and salvation of Christ. All the grand truths prefigured by the ancient Mosaic ritual are embodied in Christ. He gives the fullest personal representation of Jehovah as the God of nature, providence, and redemption, at once the Author and the Ruler of the spiritual life. In Christ, therefore, as the substance and antitype, all shadow and symbol disappear. It is a dangerous infatuation to snatch at the shadow and cling to it, when we may embrace and rest in the sufficiency of the substance. This is to restore the cancelled handwriting and nullify the splendid triumph of the cross. In Christ the ceremonial is effete, powerless, dead. He only is the changeless, eternal, all-satisfying real.

Lessons.—1. *Learn to exercise the spirit of Christian forbearance in external observances.* 2. *Be careful not to rest in the ceremonial.* 3. *Christ alone can satisfy the deepest craving of the soul.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 16, 17. *The Shadow and the Substance of the Sabbath.*

I. **The transient shadow which has passed away.**—The Sabbath as a sign between God and the Israelites, marking them off from all other nations by its observance—as a mere Jewish institution.

II. **The permanent substance which cannot pass.**—"The body is of Christ"—the Spirit of Christ is the fulfilment of the law. To have the Spirit of Christ is to have fulfilled the law. Apply this to Sabbath observance.—*F. W. Robertson.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 18, 19.

The Seductive Peril of a False Philosophy.

The apostle had warned the Colossians against the dangerous consequences of attaching too much importance to the ceremonial in religion, inasmuch as it was the substitution of the shadow for the substance. He now reveals the peril of being seduced by the theological error that insisted on interposition of angel mediators, which was the preference of an inferior member to the Head. In this verse the writer distinctly warns the Colossian Christians against the peril that threatened them, and exposes the presumptuous speculations of a false philosophy.

I. **That the teachings of a false philosophy threaten to rob the believer of his most coveted reward.**—"Let no man beguile you of your reward" (ver. 18). The Christian's career is a race; the present world is the stadium, or racecourse; Christ is the umpire—the dispenser of rewards; eternal life is the victor's prize. The Colossians were in a fair way for winning the prize; they had duly entered the lists; they were contending bravely; but the false teachers unhappily crossed their path, sought to impede their progress, and to rob them of their reward. Error is subtle in its influence and pernicious in its effects. Many erroneous opinions may possibly be held without invalidating the salvation of the soul; but any error that in any degree depreciates our estimate of Christ and interrupts the advance of our Christian life is a robbery. It may be said that the dangerous speculations of a false philosophy are confined only to a few —the higher circle of thinkers. That is bad enough. But what is damaging the higher order of intellects will by-and-by reach the lower and work its mischief there. There is need for uninterrupted vigilance.

II. **That a false philosophy advocates the most presumptuous and perilous speculations.**—1. *It affects a spurious humility.* God is unknowable to the limited and uncertain powers of man; He is too high to be accessible, and too much absorbed in loftier matters to concern Himself about individual man. He can be approached only through inferior beings, and their assistance should be humbly sought. So it reasons. But this humility was voluntary, self-induced, and was in reality another form of high spiritual pride. Humility, when it becomes self-conscious, ceases to have any value.

2. *It invents a dangerous system of angelolatry.*—"Worshipping of angels" (ver. 18). The Jews were fond of philosophising about the dignity, offices, and ranks of the angelic powers; and many held the opinion that they were messengers who presented our prayers to God. The false teachers made the most of the authority they could derive from Jewish sources. They would tell how the law was given by the disposition of angels—that angels conducted the Israelites through the wilderness, and on various occasions appeared to patriarchs, prophets, and apostles. They would dwell on the weakness of man and his distance from God, and insist that homage should bo paid to these angelic messengers as necessary mediators. Alas, how fatal has been the influence through the centuries of this delusive angelolatry! The apostle here condemns it, and thus sweeps away all ground for the Christ-dishonouring practices of invocation of saints and the worship of the Virgin.

3. *It pretends to a knowledge of the mysterious.*—"Intruding into those things which he hath not seen" (ver. 18). Man is everywhere circled with mystery. It is one of the saddest moments of life when he first becomes conscious of the limitation of his own powers, and of his utter inability to fathom the mysteries which seem to invite his inquiry while they baffle his attempt. Locke somewhere says, a worm in the drawer of a cabinet, shut up in its tiny enclosure, might as well pretend to guess at the construction of the vast universe, as mortal man venture

to speculate about the unseen world, except so far as revealed for purposes of salvation. But fools will rush in where angels fear to tread. The boast of possessing a profound knowledge of the mysterious is one of the marks of a false philosophy.

4. *It is inflated with an excessive pride.*—"Vainly puffed up by its fleshly mind" (ver. 18). The carnal mind, which is enmity against God, rises to a pitch of reckless daring in its inventions, and, revelling in its own creative genius, is vainly puffed up with a conceit of novelty and with a fancied superiority over the humbler disciple. There is no state more dangerous than this or more difficult to change. It is proof against every ordinary method of recovery. The proud man lives "half-way down the slope to hell." God only can break the delusive snare, humble the soul, and revoke its threatened doom.

III. **That a false philosophy ignores the divine source of all spiritual increase.**—1. *Christ is the great Head of the Church.* He is the centre of its unity, the primal source of its life, authority, and influence. He founded the Church, and gave it shape, symmetry, and durableness. He alone is supreme—the Alpha and Omega—the living and only Head. To ignore Him is to forfeit the substantial for the shadowy—the rock for the precarious footing of the crumbling shale.

2. *The Church is vitally and essentially united to Christ.*—"From which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together" (ver. 19). As the members of the human frame are joined to the head, and derive life, motion, and sensation from it by means of arteries, veins, nerves, and other attachments, so the spiritual members of Christ are knit to Him by invisible joints and bands, and depend on Him for sustenance, character, and influence.

3. *The vital union of the Church with Christ is the condition of spiritual increase.*—"Increaseth with the increase of God" (ver. 19). Christ is the divine source of increase, and the Church can grow only as it receives nourishment from Him. The growth corresponds with its nature—it is divine; it increaseth with the increase of God. There may be a morbid increase, as there may be an unnatural enlargement of some part of the human body; but it is only the excessive inflation of worldly splendour and ecclesiastical pretension. Like Jonah's gourd, such a growth may disappear as rapidly as it came. The true increase is that which comes from God, of which He is the source, and active, sustaining influence, and which advances in harmony with His will and purpose. Such an increase can be secured only by vital union with Christ.

Lessons.—1. *A false philosophy distorts the grandest truths.* 2. *A false philosophy substitutes for truth the most perilous speculations.* 3. *Against the teachings of a false philosophy be ever on your guard.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 18. *Philosophic Vagaries—*

I. **Making pretence of superior knowledge.**

II. **Affecting a spurious humility in worship.**

III. **Inflated with pride.**

IV. **Dangerous to those sincerely seeking the truth.**

Ver. 19. *How a Church lives and grows.*

I. **The source of all the life of the body.**—Christ is the Head, therefore the source from which all parts of the body partake of a common life. There are three symbols employed to represent the union of Christ with His Church—the vine, the body, and the marriage bond.

II. **The various and harmonious action of all the parts.**—1. *From Jesus comes all nourishment of the divine life,*

even when we think that we instruct or stimulate each other. 2. *From Jesus comes the oneness of the body.*

III. **The consequent increase of the whole.**—1. *The increase of life in the Church, both as a community and in its separate elements, depends on the harmonious activity of all the parts.* 2. *Is dependent on the activity of all, and sadly hampered when some are idle.* 3. *Depends on its vitality within and on the concurrent activity of all its members.* 4. *Depends not only on the action of all its parts, but on their health and vitality.* 5. *There is an increase which is not the increase of God.*

IV. **The personal hold of Jesus Christ which is the condition of all life and growth.**—A firm, almost desperate clutch in which Love and Need, like two hands, clasp Him and will not let Him go. Such tenacious grip implies the adhesive energy of the whole nature—the mind laying hold on truth, the heart clinging to love, the will submitting to authority.—*A. Maclaren.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 20—23.

The Ceremonial in Religion Transitory and Unsatisfying.

The apostle returns again to the question of outward observances. He saw the extreme danger with which the Colossians were threatened from that source, and before turning to other matters in his epistle he lifts up a warning voice as for the last time.

I. **That the ceremonial in religion is simply elementary.**—"The rudiments of the world" (ver. 20). The ceremonial in religion is the alphabetical stage, suited only to the world's infancy and to the crudest condition in human development. It is the childish period which, with all its toys and pictures and gewgaws, is put away when spiritual manhood is attained. It is in its nature transitory and imperfect. It conveys knowledge but in part; and when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part is done away.

II. **The ceremonial in religion is unworthy the submission of the Christian believer.**—1. *The believer is liberated from the slavery of the ceremonial.* He is "dead with Christ" (ver. 20). As Christ by His death cancelled the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and vanquished Satan and all his hosts, so the believer, united with Christ in His death, shares in the triumph of that death. He is free; he rises into a new life, not under the tyranny of the old law, with its demands and penalties, but in allegiance to Christ. He has passed into another sphere of existence. Worldly ordinances have ceased to have any value for him, because his worldly life is ended. They belong to the realm of the transitory and perishable; he has been translated into the realm of the free and the eternal.

2. *To return to the ceremonial is to forfeit Christian liberty.*—"Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" (ver. 20). It is to ignore all progress, to impugn the reality of the change wrought in the soul by spiritual baptism, to close one's eyes to the altered state of things into which he has been introduced, and to submit again to the galling yoke of legal observances and human traditions which never had divine sanction and from which he had been emancipated. It is a denial of his Christianity to subject himself again to their tyranny—to return once more to the dominion of the world. It is giving up the substance for the shadow. It is a deliberate self-degradation to the most abject and pitiable slavery. It is supposed that many of the ascetic practices of the false teachers at Colossæ were borrowed from the Pythagoreans. Their philosophy was all on the side of prohibitions, abstinences, a forced celibacy, the unlawfulness of animal food, the possibility of attaining perfection by neglecting the body, under the delusion that evil resided in matter.

III. **The ceremonial in religion, in its main features, is universally the same.**—1. *It is the same in its dictatorial prohibitions.* "Touch not; taste not; handle not" (ver. 21). Such is the arrogant language of a narrow, bigoted, and imperious superstition. It is an instruction to observe the gradual and insidious manner in which it obtains the mastery over the human conscience. *Touch not:* it prohibits even a light partaking of some meat or drink. *Taste not:* the prohibition is extended, so that it becomes a crime even to taste, though refusing to eat. *Handle not:* to come in contact with the forbidden object, even in the handling, is a dreadful sacrilege. So is it ever with the clamorous demands of a proud, assumptious ritualism. There is no end to the unauthorised prohibitions with which it seeks to bind the conscience.

2. *It is the same in its undue exaltation of the external and the transitory.*—"Which all are to perish with the using" (ver. 22). The very eating and drinking of them destroys them. They are consumed in the using; and in order to nourish us they themselves perish—a plain proof that all the benefit we receive from them respects only our physical and mortal life. What folly is it to insist on a scrupulous avoidance or observance of externals in order to salvation! You claim an affinity with the eternal, and it is unworthy of your glorious destiny to be absorbed with the worship of the perishable.

3. *It is the same in its human origin.*—"After the commandments and doctrines of men" (ver. 22). A commandment is a precept; a doctrine is the principle or truth on which it is based. The one furnishes a direction, the other the reason on which the direction rests. The ceremonial in religion is an accumulation of the commandments and doctrines of men. Depending on human authority, it has no value in itself; and when it is made obligatory in order to human salvation, it is an impious insult to Christ and an intolerable servitude to man. The commandments of men, having no solid doctrines to rest upon, are transitory and illusory.

IV. **The ceremonial in religion can never satisfy the many-sided wants of humanity.**—1. *It pretends to a wisdom it does not possess.* (1) In self-imposed methods of worship. "Which things have, indeed, a show of wisdom in will-worship" (ver. 23). It insists on certain distinctions of meats and drinks; on abstinence from this or that kind of food; on certain ritual observances as necessary in order to render due homage to God. The enthusiast for the ceremonial argues that he who only does what God positively demands does only what is common; but he who goes beyond, and submits to additional observances, reaches a higher degree of saintliness. This is will-worship, which has peculiar charms for the corrupt tendencies of our depraved nature. The works of supererogation it invents are pleasanter than the holy, humble, adoring worship of God through the blood of the cross. (2) In the affectation of a spurious humility. "In humility" (ver. 23). It is a pretence of wisdom to renounce all worldly splendour and profess to live in poverty and seclusion. But at the root of this profession the most pernicious pride may lurk. A self-conscious and dramatically acted humility is the most degrading and detestable. (3) In an unjustifiable indifference to bodily wants. "And neglecting of the body" (ver. 23). The body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and is to be honoured and cherished, and all its just wants satisfied, in order that its best powers may be employed in the service of God. But the abuse of the body in starvation, painful macerations, and squalid neglect is a folly and a sin.

2. *It is of no value in preventing the indulgence of the flesh.*—"Not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh" (ver. 23). The radical error of the ascetic lies in his belief that evil resides in matter. Not the body, but the soul, is the source of sin: the body is depraved because the soul is depraved. Sin exists as a thought and conception of the heart before it exists as an act of the flesh. No

amount of outward flagellation, or of abstinence from needful food, will satisfy the natural wants of the body, or destroy its sinful tendencies. The attempt to be virtuous by afflicting the body is like battering the outwork while the main citadel remains untouched. The outward can never satisfy the complicated needs of man's nature. First bring the soul into a right relation to God, and, with the aid of divine grace, it will control all the outgoings of the flesh.

Lessons.—1. *The ceremonial has its place in religion, and therefore should not be despised.* 2. *The believer is raised above the power of the ceremonial in religion, and therefore should not be subject to it.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 20. *Principles above Rules; or, Wheat is better than Bread.*—Bread may feed us for the moment, but when once eaten it is gone for ever. Wheat on the contrary will bear seed, increase, and multiply. Every rule is taken from a principle, as a loaf of bread is made from wheat. It is right to enforce the principle rather than the action, because a good principle is sure of producing good actions. Seeming goodness is not better than religion; precept is not better than principle.—*A. W. Hare.*

Vers. 21-23. *Asceticism*—

I. **Multiplies unnecessary restrictions.**

II. **Is a species of self-worship.**

III. **Is unjust to the body.**

CHAPTER III.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. Seek those things that are above.—Our Lord says that as He was "from above," so His disbelieving hearers were "from beneath," which He interprets as "of this world" (John viii. 23, 24). The apostle in like manner in the next verse opposes the "things above" to "things on earth."

Ver. 3. **Your life is hid with Christ in God.**—You are much more likely to have it kept pure by having it in Christ than by setting round it a hedge of "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not."

Ver. 5. **Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.**—"Quite so!" the heretic teacher might say; "this is just what we ourselves advise." "Yes," rejoins the apostle; "but let us know what it is we are to slaughter." It is no hewing and hacking of the body, but what is as much more difficult as it is noble—the excision or eradication of evil thoughts (Matt. xv. 19, 20). **Inordinate affection, evil concupiscence.**—R.V. "passion, evil desire." The former of these seems to indicate the corrupt conditions from which the latter springs. **Covetousness, which is idolatry.**—"Covetousness," or "having more." There is many a man, beside the clown in *Twelfth Night*, who says, "I would not have you to think my *desire of having* is the sin of covetousness." The full drag can afford to sacrifice (Hab. i. 16).

Ver. 8. **Anger, wrath.**—The former is the smouldering fire, the latter the fierce out-leaping flame. **Malice, blasphemy.**—The former is the vicious disposition, the latter the manifestation of it in speech that is meant to inflict injury. **Filthy communication.**—One word in the original; R.V. gives it as "shameful speaking." The word does not occur again in the New Testament. It means scurrilous or obscene speech. A glimpse of Eastern life helps us to understand the frequent injunctions as to restraint of the tongue in the New Testament. Dr. Norman Macleod says: "In vehemence of gesticulation, in genuine power of lip and lung to fill the air with a roar of incomprehensible exclamations, nothing on earth, so long as

the body retains its present arrangement of muscles and nervous vitality, can surpass the Egyptians and their language." But the same thing is witnessed of other Eastern tongues.

Ver. 9. **Lie not one to another.**—"Very elementary teaching," we should be inclined to say. Whether there was any special tendency to this vice in the Colossian converts we cannot know.

Ver. 12. **Bowels of mercies.**—R.V. "a heart of compassion." A case of concrete for abstract. The physical effect of pity lies at the bottom of the phrase.

Ver. 13. **Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another.**—Literally it would be, "Bearing with one another, and dealing graciously with yourselves"; for not only the verbs but the pronouns also change with a delicate shade of meaning. Forbearance, like a peace-making angel, passes to and fro between the incensed parties. **Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.**—The pattern of all graciousness is Christ. See His parable (Matt. xviii. 33).

Ver. 14. **Above all these things put on charity.**—Reminding us of the exalted place which the queenly virtue holds in St. Paul's triad. As the outermost dress of an Oriental was perhaps that which was most serviceable, so whatever else is put on, "above everything" love must be remembered. **Which is the bond of perfectness.**—"That in which all the virtues are so bound together that perfection is the result and not one of them is wanting to that perfection" (*Grimm*).

Ver. 15. **And let the peace of God rule in your hearts.**—R.V. margin, "arbitrate." We met the verb for "rule" in ii. 18, but with a prefix "against." "Let the peace of God be umpire," says the apostle, in every case of uncertainty and hesitation. He who slept on Galilee's stormy waters had but to say, "Peace! Be still!" and there was a great calm. He said, "My peace I leave with you"; and reckless of consequences the men who received it amazed the authorities by the boldness of their question, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts iv. 19).

Ver. 16. **Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.**—The word for "dwell in" is the same which assures the believer of an indwelling power which shall quicken the mortal body, and which describes the divine act of grace, "I will dwell in them." **In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.**—See on Eph. v. 18, 19. The same composition may be either psalm, hymn, or spiritual song. The first may be a technical word, as in Luke xxiv. 44. It indicates a song accompanied by a stringed instrument. A hymn is a song in praise of some one, exalting the character and attributes. The third term is the most comprehensive, and to it, with good reason, St. Paul prefixes "spiritual." Bacchanalian songs were common enough about Colossæ with their noisy, unhallowed mirth. St. Paul, like St. James, would not object to his readers being merry if the spiritual joys

> "From out their hearts arise
> And speak and sparkle in their eyes
> And vibrate on their tongues."

Ver. 18. **As it is fit in the Lord.**—See Eph. v. 22. The feeling of propriety St. Paul emphasises here, and limits it "in the Lord."

Ver. 19. **Be not bitter against them.**—As love in its most degraded form might alternate with paroxysms of anger, St. Paul uses the nobler word for Christian love which casts out hatred as well as fear.

Ver. 20. **For this is well-pleasing.**—Eph. vi. 1: "This is right." What in Ephesians is regarded as an equitable due from child to parent is here looked at in another light. The best commentary is Luke ii. 51, 52. The child Jesus was *subject* to his parents and increased *in favour with God.*

Ver. 21. **Fathers, provoke not your children.**—The word for "provoke" is not the same as in Eph. vi. 4. There the word is "do not exasperate." Here it is "do not irritate." The difficulty of discriminating between them may perhaps show how near the original words are in meaning. "Irritation is the first consequence of being too exacting with children, and irritation leads to moroseness" (*Lightfoot*). **Lest they be discouraged.**—Broken-spirited. It is a sad sight to see a man for whom the stress of life has been too much, but to see a child cowed and dejected—the world has no sadder spectacle.

Ver. 23. **Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily.**—Eph. vi. 7, "With good will doing service." R.V. gives the distinction which is obliterated by "do, do" of A.V. Whatsoever ye do, work heartily (margin, from the soul).

Ver. 25. **He that doeth wrong.**—The participle of the original points to the habitual practice of wrong-doing. **There is no respect of persons.**—In the Ephesian letter this consideration is urged upon the masters as it is here upon the slaves. Both are amenable to the same authority.

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

The Higher Aspirations of the Soul.

You have seen the clouds gather in the sky and settle on the hills. The thunder mutters, the rain falls, and the scene is one of storm, confusion, and darkness. Suddenly the whole aspect of the heavens is changed. A blaze of light springs up among the hills; the storm ceases; the gloom is swept away; and the outlook is one of tranquillity, of triumph, and of splendour. Similar to this is the striking change between the close of the last chapter of this epistle and the beginning of the present one. The grave warnings against the sombre errors of a false philosophy, and the supposed meritorious torturings of the body, which occupy a considerable part of the second chapter, give place in the opening of the third chapter to a luminous and inspiring picture of the glorious privileges and lofty destiny of the believing soul. These verses teach that, being raised by Christ into newness of life, the soul should aspire to the attainment of the highest blessings.

I. **The distinguished relation in which the believing soul stands to Christ.**—"Risen with Christ" (ver. 1).

1. *This relation implies the living union of the soul with Christ.*—The apostle had spoken of the soul as dying with Christ, as buried with Him, as quickened with Him; and now he advances another step, and declares that it is also raised with Him. The union between the believer and Christ was so complete that he participates with Christ in all He has done. "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 4). As the dead body of the man cast into the sepulchre of Elisha revived and stood up the moment it touched the bones of the prophet (2 Kings xiii. 21), so the soul, dead in trespasses and sins, is quickened by believing contact with Christ, and rises into a higher and more glorious life.

2. *This relation indicates the nature and tendencies of the soul.*—"Risen with Christ: . . . set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." (vers. 1, 2). The change involved in union with Christ affects man's whole nature. It affects not only his practical conduct, but also his intellectual conceptions. He is translated from earth to heaven; and with this translation his point of view is altered, his standard of judgment wholly changed. His aspirations spurn the earthly and transitory, and soar towards the heavenly and eternal. The flies that sport upon the summer stream, while they plunge their bodies in the water, are careful not to wet their wings, so that they may fly again into the sunny air. So, while we are necessarily immersed in "things on the earth," we should take heed that the wings of our soul are not so clogged as to retard our flight to heaven.

II. **The sublime objects of the soul's higher aspirations.**—"Things above" (ver. 2).

1. *Christ is above.*—"Where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (ver. 2). This indicates that Christ is exalted to the highest dignity. He is above all angelic powers, whatever their position or rank. The right hand of God also indicates the right hand of power. Thence Christ wields all the authority and power of universal government. "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour." He reigns on high in order to carry out to a glorious consummation the work He accomplished on the cross. To Him all hearts turn for love and blessedness, as the flowers turn to the sun. The rudiments of the world have no longer any power to satisfy. The soul ascends to heaven, for where

the treasure is there will be the heart also; and the flow of time is rapidly hurrying us on to the moment when we shall be

"Caught up to share
The triumph of our Lord."

2. *The source of the greatest spiritual blessings is above.*—When Christ ascended into the heavens He received gifts for men; and from His lofty throne He delights to distribute those gifts to the needy sons of men. Thence we receive pardon, the conscious favour of God, holiness of character, comfort in every time of distress, and hope to light the pathway of the future. Of all the blessings laid up for us above, the highest and the best is that which in itself includes all others—the gift of the Holy Ghost. All, all we want is there.

3. *The heavenly home is above.*—There is the abode of peace and purity; there temptation has no power, and suffering and sorrow can never enter; there the Saviour reveals His glories and diffuses the joy of His radiant presence; there all the members of the Father's family assemble from every part of the globe, never more to separate. The soul, burdened with the cares of life, and troubled with multiplied disappointments, yearns for the rest of the heavenly home. The things on the earth can never satisfy the wants of the soul; they are unsuited to it; they are beneath it; and, liberated from their trammels by the resurrection power of Christ, it seeks its true happiness above the stars.

III. **The paramount duty of the soul to aspire to the highest good.**—Seek, set "your affections on things above" (ver. 1). A similar expression repeated for the emphasis. You are not only to *seek* heaven, but also to *think* heaven. The understanding must be engaged in duly estimating the value of heavenly things, the will in preferring them above all things earthly, the affections in embracing them as the objects to be most evidently desired and loved; in fact, all the powers of the soul must be constantly exercised in the search. The soul, raised from the death of sin, is ever responding to the attractive influence of its risen Lord. "Being thus already risen, every motion of grace is the struggle of the soul for the final consummation—the bird is caged, but the wings are free to flutter within their prison." The soul is now willing, cheerfully and faithfully, to follow the call of duty, whatever it may entail.

"Oft where she leads, thy blood must mark thy footsteps;
Oft where she leads, thy head must bear the storm,
And thy shrunk form endure heat, cold, and hunger;
But she will guide thee up to noble heights,
Which he who gains seems native of the sky;
While earthly things lie stretched beneath his feet,
Diminished, shrunk, and valueless."

Lessons.—1. *The soul is endowed with vast powers and capable of the highest destiny.* 2. *It is sad to witness thousands whose souls rise no higher than the things on the earth.* 3. *The soul can realise its highest aspirations only as it is risen with Christ.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. *Seeking the Things Above.*

I. **Contemplate the sublime object**—the state of future blessedness of believers. 1. *The perfection of character they exhibit.* 2. *The exercises in which they shall be engaged.* 3. *The happiness in which they participate.* 4. *The friendships they share.*

II. **The conduct enjoined upon us.**—"Seek those things." 1. *Implies belief in their existence.* 2. *That attention is directed much towards them.* 3. *Set our attachment upon them.* 4. *Use diligent and persevering exertions to obtain them.*

III. **Motives to this conduct.**—1.

A regard to consistency. 2. *The reasonableness of the duty.* 3. *Present advantages.* 4. *Because they are the scene in which are displayed Christ's personal presence and glory.*

Risen with Christ.

I. **Christianity begins where everything else ends: it begins with death.**

II. **After dying to sin we are to begin to live in good earnest.**

III. **The Christian toils, labours, and tasks his mind for the glory of God and the good of others.**

IV. **The true Christian seeks the things which are above.**—1. *Holiness.* 2. *Love.* 3. *Peace.* 4. *Truth.*—*A. W. Hare.*

The New Life.

I. **There is a great difference between the new life and the old.**—1. *In our feelings.* 2. *Principles.* 3. *Aims.* 4. *Methods.* 5. *Conduct.* 6. *Thoughts.* 7. *Company.* 8. *Influence.*

II. **This difference should lead us to think much of heaven and to seek after heavenly things.**—1. *To know all we can about heaven.* 2. *To prepare all we can for heaven.* 3. *To take all we can with us to heaven.*—*Preacher's Magazine.*

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

The Present Condition and Future Glory of Life in Christ.

The Christian life has a twofold aspect. Outwardly it is shorn of all splendours, and to the eye of the world appears a life of weakness, ignominy, and suffering; but inwardly it is radiant with divine light and pervaded with a heavenly peace. The believer is often as a monarch in the disguise of a beggar. The world knows nothing of the new life of which he has become possessed, and the new life must know nothing of the world. Its aspirations are directed towards higher things. The relish for earthly things is gone.

I. **That the present condition of the believer's life in Christ involves a new relation to outward things.**—"For ye are dead" (ver. 3). There was a time when he not only lived in the world, but *to* the world and *for* the world. He was wholly captivated and absorbed in the pursuits and enjoyments of the carnal mind. But now, while still in the world, he is dead to its charms and to its ordinances. All the mainsprings of activity are changed. He is risen with Christ and shares the power of His resurrection life. Man lives where He loves, and, having experienced so complete a change, his affections are now fixed on things above, and his life is bound up in the love and service of Christ, who sitteth on the right hand of God. He is dead because he is crucified with Christ, and hath put off the old man—the old fleshly nature—with his deeds. This death involves a renunciation of all the ceremonial observances against which the apostle so faithfully warned in the preceding chapter—the Mosaic ritual, the vain philosophy, the angelolatry, the pride of the fleshly mind, the traditions and commandments of men, and all the pernicious doctrines of the false teachers. He is dead to the past, and realising the beating of a new life within him, he enters upon a brighter and loftier career.

II. **That the present condition of the believer's life in Christ is one of concealment from the outward world.**—1. *It is hid.* "Your life is hid" (ver. 3). All life is hid. Its origin is a profound mystery. The botanist fails to discover it as he picks his plant into microscopic atoms. The scalpel of the anatomist has not pierced its dark domain and laid bare its hiding-place. Its presence is known only by its effects. So is it with the new life of the soul. It is hid from the world. It has a glory and a power of its own; but the world is incapable of appreciating either. It is not a life of vulgar display and noisy demonstration. It is gentle, quiet, and retiring, sometimes obscured by a tempest of persecution

and suffering. It is sometimes partially hidden to the believer himself when assailed by temptations and oppressed by the weight of heavy chastisements. Yet that hidden life is the power that shall shake and transform the world.

2. *It is hid with Christ.*—"Your life is hid with Christ" (ver. 3). Christ Himself was hidden when on earth. To the undiscerning He was as a root out of a dry ground, possessing neither form nor comeliness. Even now Christ is hidden to the worldly mind; and the believer's life is hidden with Him, as a river, concealed for a time in a hidden channel, flows on beneath and out of sight. This hiding of the believer's life with Christ indicates (1) *Dependence.* It is not hid with the believer himself. He derives it from Christ, as the great fontal source of all life; and on Him he depends for its constant supply and nourishment. The springs of this life abide when every other channel of supply is dry and its fount exhausted. We must wait on Christ for daily supplies of living water. It indicates (2) *Security.* Our life is safer in Christ's keeping than it could be in our own. Man was once entrusted with the gift of a glorious life, and he lost it. But in the hands of Christ our life is out of all danger. It is secure amid the conflicts of time, the subtle temptations of the world, and the wild rage of demons.

3. *It is hid in the depths of the Godhead.*—"Your life is hid with Christ in God" (ver. 3). A grand but unfathomable truth! It is not *lost* in the abyss of Deity, as the mystic or pantheist would teach; but it is so hid as to retain its own conscious individuality, while sharing in the boundless life of God. It is a gift from God, bestowed through Christ the great Mediator, created by the power and energy of the Holy Ghost; so that the nature, manner, and destiny of the gift are hidden in God through the mediation of His Son. "God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." The exercise of faith brings the soul into living union with the glorious Trinity.

III. **That the believer's life in Christ will, in the future, be manifested in ineffable glory.**—1. *There will be a signal manifestation of Christ in the future.* "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear" (ver. 4). Christ is now invisible to His people and to the world. He withdrew from the scene of His suffering ministry, entered the serene heights of heaven, and there, all-potent, is carrying on His high purposes of grace and salvation. But by-and-by—not at the bidding of the impatient prophets, who dare to fix the Lord a time, and, in their too realistic interpretation of His word, consider His second coming as the grand and only specific for the world's evils—in His own good time, to the joy of His people and the dismay of His foes, He will come in overwhelming glory.

2. *The believer will share in the ineffable glory of that manifestation.*—"Then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (ver. 4). (1) This implies *public recognition.* The believer, obscure and despised on earth, is acknowledged before the universe as related to Christ by the dearest ties and as deriving his life from Him. All the ends of secrecy are answered. The hidden is revealed. The baffled, persecuted, unappreciated, afflicted people of God are for ever vindicated. (2) This also implies a *personal participation* in the splendour of Christ's triumph and in the bliss of His character. "With Him in glory." Glory is a comprehensive term, and not easily defined. But whether we regard it as expressive of external and visible splendour, or as describing a condition of unutterable and endless felicity, in either sense, or both, the believer shares it with his exultant Lord. Rapture of raptures! to see Jesus, to be with Him, and to live in the sunshine of His smile for ever!

Lessons.—1. *The believer's life in Christ is a hidden, but a real life.* 2. *Bear patiently the trials of the present life.* 3. *The glory of the believer's future life will more than recompense him for the troubles of the present.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 3. *Death and Life with Christ.*

I. **Ye are dead.**—1. *In your original state of unconcern and unbelief ye are dead.* 2. *By the Holy Ghost you are made to recognise this death as real and to acquiesce in it as just.* 3. *You continue to be thus dead with Christ.*

II. **Your life is with Christ.**—1. *As partakers of His right to live.* 2. *In respect of the new spirit of your life.* 3. *Your life being with Christ must be where He is.* In God as its source, its centre, its pattern. 4. *This life with Christ is hid.* For security; in its intimacy; as separated from the world; is not to be always hidden (ver. 4).—*R. S. Candlish.*

Ver. 4. *Christ our Life.*

I. **The vital principle recognised.**—"Christ who is our life." 1. *The life is spiritual in its nature.* 2. *Eternal in its duration.*

II. **The splendid spectacle predicted.**—"Christ shall appear."

1. *The manner.*—In the glory of His Father, with His angels.

2. *The purpose.*—To judge the quick and the dead.

III. **The glorious hope awakened.**—"Then shall ye appear with Him in glory." 1. *The great hope of the Christian life is that one day we shall be with Christ.* 2. *That we shall participate in Christ's glory.* 3. *These words are full of comfort to those drawing near to death.—J. T. Woodhouse.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 5—9.

Mortification of the Sinful Principle in Man.

Practice follows doctrine. The genuineness of a precept is tested by its adaptability to the practical working out of life's problem. The apostle has laid down his doctrine clearly and emphatically, and now he proceeds to enforce the use of the best methods for securing the highest degree of personal holiness. These methods are in perfect harmony with the exalted experience into which the believer is introduced when he is risen with Christ and participates in that glorious life which is hid with Christ in God.

I. **That the sinful principle in man has an active outward development.**—1. *It is mundane in its tendencies.* "Your members which are upon the earth" (ver. 5). It is earthly, sensual, depraved. It teaches the soul to grovel when it ought to soar. It is in sympathy with the whole mass of earthly things—riches, honour, pleasure, fame—which stand opposed to the higher aspirations of the soul, whose affection is fixed on things above.

2. *It is manifested in acts of gross sensuality.*—"Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence" (ver. 5). A revolting catalogue, a loathsome index to the festering mass of corruption within! A rake's progress has been portrayed by the genius of a Hogarth; but where is the pencil that can delineate the dark progress of evil? For there is an order observed in its abhorrent development. The mischief begins in evil concupiscence; yielding to the first unholy impulse, it goes on to lustful and inordinate affection; proceeds to uncleanness—pollutions which follow on the two preceding vices; and ends in fornication, both in its ordinary meaning and in that of adultery. Possibly the apostle had reference to the rites of Bacchus and Cybele, which were wont to be celebrated with many peculiar impurities in Phrygia, of which Colossæ, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were cities, and which so deeply depraved the morals of the people. The outgoings of evil are not less rampant and shocking in modern times. Evil is the same in principle everywhere.

3. *It is recognised by a debasing idolatry.*—"And covetousness, which is

idolatry" (ver. 5). Covetousness is a sin that comes the earliest into the human heart, and is the last and most difficult to be driven out. It is an insatiable lust after material possessions—the greed of getting more for the sake of more, till often the brain is turned and the heart withered. The apostle brands it with the significant term "idolatry." With the covetous man his idol is his gold, which, in his eyes, answereth all things; his soul is the shrine where the idol is set up; and the worship which he owes to God is transferred to mammon. Avarice is the seed of the most hateful and outrageous vices. The exhortation to mortify the flesh is pressed home by reminding them of the certainty of the divine wrath which would overtake the contumacious and disobedient.

II. **That the active outgoings of the sinful principle in man call for the infliction of divine vengeance.**—The wrath of God is not a malignant, unreasoning passion, like that with which we are familiar among men. Nor is it a strong figure of speech, into which the maudlin philosophers of the day would fain resolve it. It is an awful reality. It is not merely a thing of the past, to the terrible havoc of which history bears faithful and suggestive testimony. It is the wrath to come, and will be "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." It is not inconsistent with infinite love, but is an impressive form in which the divine righteousness expresses itself against all disobedient and impenitent workers of iniquity.

III. **That the indulgence of the sinful principle in man is inconsistent with the new life he has in Christ.**—There was a time when the sins here enumerated formed the atmosphere in which the Colossians lived, moved, and breathed; they represented the condition of their life and the character of their practice: they lived and walked in sin. But that time was past. A great change had taken place. They were surrounded by a purer atmosphere; they lived in another world; they aspired to a nobler destiny. To return to the vices and idolatries of their former life was utterly inconsistent with their exalted character; it was unworthy the high and holy vocation wherewith they were called. It is salutary to be reminded now and then of our former life of sin. It magnifies the grace of God in the great change He has wrought. It warns against the danger of being drawn into old habits and associations. It stimulates the heavenward tendencies of the new life.

IV. **That the sinful principle in man is the source of the most malignant passions.**—The former classification embraced sins which related more especially to self; this includes sins which have a bearing upon others.

1. *There are sins of the heart and temper.*—"Anger, wrath, malice" (ver. 8). There is an anger which is a righteous indignation against wrong, and which is so far justifiable and sinless. It is the anger without cause or beyond cause, and which degenerates into a bitter feeling of revenge, that is here condemned. Wrath is the fierce ebullition of anger, expressed with ungovernable passion; and is at all times unseemly and unlawful. Malice is anger long cherished, until it becomes a settled habit of mind. It involves hatred, secret envy, desire of revenge and retaliation, and universal ill-will towards others. It is altogether a diabolical passion. If anger exceeds its bounds, it becomes wrath; if wrath lies brooding in the bosom, it degenerates into malice.

2. *There are sins of the tongue.*—"Blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another" (vers. 8, 9). Blasphemy in a lower sense includes all calumny, evil-speaking, railing, slandering, scoffing, ridiculing—all vile insinuations, whether against God or man. Filthy communication refers to all foul-mouthed abuse, indelicate allusions, details of vicious scenes, and whatever hurts the feelings and shocks the sense of propriety rather than injures the character. Lying is also here condemned. Wherever this vice prevails society is rotten to the core. The almost total want of truthfulness is one of the saddest

features of the moral condition of heathendom. Lying basely violates the gift of speech, saps the foundation of human intercourse, and overturns the first principles of morals. That which is spoken in ignorance, though untrue, is not a lie; but to equivocate, to speak so as to lead another to a false conclusion, is to lie as really as if the speaker deliberately stated what he knew was a falsehood. All these sins are directly opposed to that ingenuous sincerity which is the leading characteristic of the new life in Christ.

V. **That the sinful principle in man, and all its outgoings, must be wholly renounced and resolutely mortified.**—"But now ye also put off all these" (ver. 8). "Mortify, therefore, your members" (ver. 5). There is much force in the word "therefore." Since ye are dead with Christ and are risen with Him, since ye possess a glorious life hid with Christ in God, *therefore* mortify—put to death the members of your earthly and corrupt nature, and encourage the expansion of that pure, beauteous, and exalted life which ye have received through the faith of the operation of God. Not that we are to kill or mutilate the members of the body that have been the instruments of sin, but to crucify the interior vices of the mind and will. It is wholly a moral process; the incipient inclination to sin must be restrained, deadened, crushed. In order to this there must be the total renunciation of all sin. "But now ye also put off all these." The verb is imperative and the exhortation emphatic. There must be not only an abstinence from open vice—heathen morality insists on as much as this—but there must be the putting away of every secret evil passion—removing it out of sight as we would remove a dead body to burial. As the prince casts off the coarse garment in which he has been disguised, and stands forth in an apparel befitting his rank and dignity, so the believer is to divest himself of the unsightly and filthy garment of the old man, and allow the new man to appear adorned with heavenly magnificence and bright with the inextinguishable lustre of a divine spiritual life.

Lessons.—1. *The sinful principle in man is a great power.* 2. *The new spiritual life in the believer is in ceaseless antagonism with the old.* 3. *The constant duty of the believer is to subdue and destroy the sinful principle.* 4. *In fulfilling this duty all the powers of good are on his side.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 5. *Covetousness, which is Idolatry.*

I. **In its essence.**—It is putting the creature in the place of the Creator, and giving it the worship due to God alone.

II. **In its practice.**—Body and soul are consecrated to the service of mammon.

III. **In its punishment.**—Idolatry is a sin peculiarly obnoxious to God—is not merely the breach of His law, but treason against His government. God deprives the covetous of his idol at last, and sends him treasureless into the unseen world, wrecked and ruined, to endure the wrath to come.—*Preacher's Magazine.*

Ver. 6. *The Wrath of God—*

I. **A reality to be dreaded.**

II. **Is roused by the workings of iniquity.**

III. **Will overtake the disobedient.**

Vers. 7-9. *The New Life—*

I. **Must break thoroughly away from the old life of sin.**

II. **Is evident in temper and speech.**

III. **Is the interpretation of all that is pure and true.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 9—11.

The New Spiritual Nature.

In the primitive Church it was customary for the new converts, after putting aside their heathenish vestments, to array themselves in white garments, that they might indicate, in the most public manner, the great change which had taken place. It was perhaps in allusion to this custom that the apostle bases his exhortation. A courtier would not dare to insult his sovereign by appearing before him in squalid and tattered garments, but would be specially studious to attire himself in a dress every way suited to his rank and character. So the believer would not dishonour God and disgrace the religion he has embraced by exhibiting the vices and passions that characterised his former unrenewed state, but is the more solicitous to magnify the grace of God in a life of outward consistency and purity. In the former verses the writer has insisted on sanctification in its negative aspect—the mortification of sin, the putting off the old man. In these words he deals with sanctification on its positive side, and shows that it is the putting on the new spiritual nature, in which the believer is ever advancing to a higher knowledge. Observe :—

I. **That the possession of the new spiritual nature implies a complete change of the whole man.**—"Seeing that ye have put off the old man, with his deeds, and have put on the new man" (vers. 9, 10). The believer has a twofold moral personality. There is in him the old man—the sinful principle; and there is in him also the new—the God-like, spiritual nature. Whatever we bring with us from the womb of our mother is the old man; whatever we receive by the grace of the Holy Spirit is the new. In the great spiritual transformation experienced by every believer there is a twofold and coincident operation—the putting off of the old and the putting on of the new; there is an act of renunciation and unclothing and an act of reception and investment. This change is complete; it pervades the whole man, ruling every power, fashioning the character, and inspiring the entire life. This change is divine in its origin and outworking. Man has no power of himself to effect the renewal of his nature. It is "not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It is the triumph of divine grace, and to God only all praise is due.

II. **That the new spiritual nature is ever advancing to a higher knowledge.**—"Which is renewed in knowledge" (ver. 10), which is ever being renewed unto perfect knowledge (*Lightfoot*). The present tense is used, and it is indicated that the new spiritual nature does not reach perfection at once, but is in a state of growth and development. The realisation of the new life in man is bounded by the amount and character of the knowledge he possesses, and by the clearness and tenacity with which that knowledge is apprehended and maintained. The experience may be below the actual knowledge possessed, but cannot be beyond it. Whatever degree of holiness the soul attains, it is still susceptible of advancement. The process of renewal is continually going on, as the statue grows, under the chisel of the sculptor, into a more perfect form of beauty. The knowledge referred to is the true knowledge of Christ as opposed to the false knowledge of the heretical teachers. The process of renewal increases the capacity of the believing soul to appreciate the knowledge of divine and heavenly realities, and the increase in the knowledge of the highest things reacts advantageously on the renewed nature. The higher we ascend in the knowledge of God, the more like Him do we become.

III. **That the new spiritual nature is refashioned after the most perfect model.**—"After the image of Him that created him" (ver. 10). Man was originally

created in the image of God, that image consisting in a moral resemblance—"in righteousness and true holiness." Christ is Himself "the image of the invisible God," and conformity to Him is the pattern of our renewal, the all-perfect standard towards which we are continually to approximate. The moral image which we lost in the fall of the first Adam is more than regained in the second Adam. Redemption places man on a higher platform than he would have occupied if he had retained the moral condition in which he was originally created. It brings him nearer to God, gives him a broader and more sympathetic insight into the divine character and purposes, and makes him more like God. In the spiritual region into which the believer in Christ is transferred all minor distinctions vanish. Not only do they not exist, they cannot exist. It is a region to which they are utterly unsuited, and cannot therefore be recognised.

IV. **That the new spiritual nature is superior to all earthly distinctions.**—1. *It is superior to all national distinctions.* "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew" (ver. 11). To the Jew the whole world was divided into two classes: Jews and Gentiles—the privileged and unprivileged portions of mankind; religious prerogative being taken as the line of demarcation. But such a narrow distinction is antagonistic to the broad and generous spirit of the gospel. Let a man be but renewed in Christ Jesus, and it inquires not as to what country he belongs.

2. *It is superior to all ritualistic distinctions.*—"Circumcision nor uncircumcision" (ver. 11). It matters not whether a man is born in a Christian country, and brought up in the midst of the greatest ecclesiastical privileges, or whether he is cradled in the darkest paganism; in either case a change of heart is absolutely necessary. No branch of the universal Church can claim the exclusive right of admitting souls into heaven; and it is intolerable impertinence to insist upon the necessity of ceremonial observances in order to salvation—as was the case with the false teachers of Colossæ, and as is the case with the pretentious ritualism of the day. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature."

3. *It is superior to all political distinctions.*—"Barbarian, Scythian" (ver. 11). Like the Jews, the Greeks divided mankind into two classes—Greeks and barbarians—civilisation and culture being now the criterion of distinction. The Scythian was the lowest type of barbarian. Christianity acknowledges no such distinction. Whether gathered from the most refined or most barbarous nation, all are one in Christ Jesus. The gospel has broken down the narrow and arbitrary classification of the race, maintained the right of all nations of the world to be classed as one genus, and replaced the *barbarian* by the more humane and unifying title of *brother*. Max Müller writes: "*Humanity* is a word which you look for in vain in Plato or Aristotle; the idea of mankind as one family, as the children of one God, is an idea of Christian growth; and the science of mankind, and of the languages of mankind, is a science which, without Christianity, would never have sprung into life."

4. *It is superior to all social distinctions.*—"Bond nor free" (ver. 11). The diversities of condition which divide men in the present world are unknown in the sphere of this spiritual renewal. The grace which changed the heart of Philemon the master also renewed the soul of Onesimus, his slave; and often the bondman is the first to enter into the liberty of the children of God. Here the rich and poor, the nobility and peasantry, meet together, and form one common brotherhood.

V. **That the new spiritual nature recognises Christ as everything.**—"But Christ is all, and in all" (ver. 11). All belongs to Him; He originated and sustains all, and He is in all. He is everything to the believer—the source and centre of his life, the ideal after which he continually aspires, the possession by which He will be enriched for ever. The believer is a living, speaking, acting expression of the

Christ within him. Christ, without the exclusion of any nation or sect, unites all; and so, through His indwelling in all, is Himself all.

Lessons.—1. *Christ is the Author, Pattern, and End of the new spiritual nature.* 2. *To put on the new spiritual nature it is essential to believe in Christ.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 9-11. *Religion a Change of Life.*

I. **Evident by putting off the old nature and its sins** (ver. 9).

II. **By putting on a new nature renewed after the divine likeness** (ver. 10).

III. **Superior to all conventional distinctions** (ver. 11).

IV. **In which Christ is everything** (ver. 11).

Ver. 11. *Christ All and in All.*

I. **Christ is all and in all in the realm of creation.**—The vast fabric of created things sprang into being at His word. Out of nothing He created all that is. The distance between being and no-being is so great that nothing short of infinite power can cause that to be which never before existed. The heavens are "the firmament of His power." He made the stars, kindled their brilliant fires, fixed their rank, regulated their motions, and appointed their mission. He formed the earth, robed it in vestments of ever-changing beauty, and endowed it with unfailing productiveness. He fashioned man after the model of His own illustrious image, freighted him with faculties of wondrous compass, indicated the possibilities of his career, and the character of his destiny. Christ is the grand centre of the magnificent systems by which He is encircled, and which He has grouped around Himself by the exercise of His creative hand. On Him their continued existence every moment hangs.

II. **Christ is all and in all in the sphere of providence.**—He sustains and governs all. Close as population follows on the heels of production, food never fails for man and beast. Study the sublime epic on the divine preservation furnished by Psalm civ., and consider how the history of human experience in all ages confirms the truth. Christ controls all the forces of nature. The sweep of the heavenly bodies, the surge and re-surge of the tide, the eccentric course and velocity of the wind, the departure and return of the light, the roll of the dreaded thunder, the recurrent phases of the seasons, all are obedient to His nod. He is predominant among the spiritual agencies of the universe. He restricts the power of the great enemy of man. He restrains the flow of evil. He governs the complicated passions of human hearts, and makes even the wrath of men to praise Him. He guards, guides, and delivers His Church. The greatness of His providential power is seen in His accomplishing the mightiest results by insignificant instrumentalities. He is conducting all things to a glorious consummation.

III. **Christ is all and in all in the work of redemption.**—He suffered to the death on behalf of the sinning race. He was a voluntary victim. He was unique in His person—comprising in Himself the divine and human natures. As man, He met all the necessities of sinful and condemned humanity; as God, He answered all the requirements of the divine righteousness. While the greatest modern philosophers are puzzling their minds with an endless variety of methods for recovering man from his lapsed condition, we behold the problem solved in the life, sufferings, and death of Christ. That was a method of redemption that would never have occurred to a finite mind; and it is now beyond the range of the greatest human intellect to fathom. Christ, and Christ alone, could redeem. In that sphere He is

all in all, or He is nothing. His work of redemption is an entrancing expression of the tenderest, deepest, most mysterious love.

IV. **Christ is all and in all in the kingdom of glory.**—He is the Head of all principalities and powers in the heavenly places. They depend on Him for life and purity, they obey His slightest word, they adore His infinite majesty, they delight in His hallowed fellowship. Christ is also Head over all things to the Church, which is His body; the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. He is the central attraction and source of bliss in the realm of glory. The redeemed cast their crowns before Him, and chant His praise in ceaseless anthems. If Christ were absent, heaven would lose its greatest charm.

"I love to think of heaven; its cloudless light,
Its tearless joys, its recognitions and its fellowships
Of love and joy unending; but when my mind anticipates
The sight of God incarnate, wearing on His hands,
And feet, and side, marks of the wounds
Which He, for me, on Calvary endured,
All heaven beside is swallowed up in this;
And He who was my hope of heaven below,
Becomes the glory of my heaven above."

V. **Christ is all and in all to the believing soul.**—He appears as the great Emancipator; He delivers from the power of darkness, and translates the benighted but groping soul into the kingdom of light. He gives rest to the weary and heavy laden. He comforts the mourner. He defends and succours the tempted. He is the refuge in every time of distress. All the wants of the soul are anticipated and abundantly supplied. He will conduct safely through all the changeful scenes of this life; and finally invest the soul with the imperishable splendours of an endless future. Christ is the great necessity and the all-satisfying portion of the soul.

Lessons.—1. *Christ is supreme in all spheres.* 2. *Christ is the great need of the human soul.* 3. *Faith in Christ brings the soul into a personal participation in the divine fulness.*

Christ is All and in All.

I. **The essential glories of Christ.**—He possesses all things.

II. **Christ has purchased all blessings for us.**—All temporal and all spiritual blessings.

III. **All blessings are treasured up in Christ for the eternal use of His Church.**

IV. **He will keep His family in the possession of all good for ever.**—*W. Howels.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12, 13.

Essentials of the Christian Character.

In the cultivation of a rare and valuable plant care must be taken to rid it of everything that would retard its growth, and to supply it with whatever aids it in reaching the highest possibility of shapeliness and beauty. Not only must it be severely pruned and divested of every noxious weed and destructive parasite, but it must be diligently tended, and liberally provided with air, light, and moisture. So is it in the training of the Christian character. It is not enough that the old man—the sinful principle—is suppressed, mortified, deadened; all the graces of the new man—the new spiritual nature—must be assumed and sedulously cultivated. Religion is not a dry, sapless, dead negation, but a grand positive reality—an active, ever-growing life, pushing its way through every channel of man's nature, and fashioning his character after the loftiest pattern of moral loveliness and purity. The change the Colossians had experienced furnished the most forcible reason why they should advance in spiritual development. Having risen with Christ, and having put off the old man, with his deeds, there is an unmistakable emphasis in the exhortation—*Put on, therefore*, the characteristics of the new man.

I. **That the Christian character is distinguished by a special designation.**—"The elect of God, holy and beloved" (ver. 12).

1. *Distinguished as the object of the divine choice.*—"The elect of God"—chosen by Him, as an act of undeserved, unmerited mercy, to the knowledge of Himself and His glorious salvation; called out of darkness and translated into the kingdom of His dear son. This election is a condition of exalted privilege to which all rise who accept the message of God's mercy through Jesus Christ.

2. *Distinguished by personal purity.*—"Holy." Here is the evidence and practical result of the divine election. "Chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph. i. 4). The people of God are called to be holy—consecrated to His service; set apart from a common and wholly devoted to a sacred purpose. Holiness is the habitual condition, aim, delight, and employment of the Christian's life.

3. *Distinguished by the divine affection.*—"Beloved." The believer is the object of God's special love, of the favour which He beareth unto His people. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God." The epithets here used have each the force of a motive. Since the believer is *elect, holy, beloved*, let him act in harmony with his exalted character and calling. Lavater has said, "The more honesty a man has, the less he affects the air of a saint."

II. **That the Christian character is distinguished by a heartfelt sympathy.**—1. *This sympathy arises from a spirit of tender mercy.* "Bowels of mercies" (ver. 12)—a phrase which expresses the effect on the body of strong emotions of pity. It was said of Joseph that "his bowels did yearn over his brethren, and he sought where to weep." The miseries of our fellow-creatures, especially of those who are in a worse condition than ourselves, call for our compassion and help; and a genuine pity is not only visible in the countenance and uttered by the lips, but felt in the inmost heart, and prompts to generous actions.

2. *This sympathy arises from a spirit of kindness.*—"Kindness" refers to the temper we should show towards those we meet in the daily intercourse of life who are on an equality with ourselves. The Christian should be amiable, courteous, kind in speech and action, eager to relieve others according to his means—the farthest remove from a crabbed, sullen, churlish disposition. A hard, cold, selfish, unfeeling heart is a characteristic of fallen, unrewed man; *bowels of mercies* and *kindness* of the renewed one.

III. **That the Christian character is distinguished by a genuine humility.**—"Humbleness of mind" (ver. 12). These words describe the estimate that is to be formed of self. The believer is taught not to overrate nor unduly to depreciate himself. He is governed by the apostolic rule, "Let each esteem other better than themselves." The more exalted his views of God, and the more he remembers his own unworthiness, weakness, ignorance, and sin, the more softly and lowly does he seek to walk. As in the garden that branch hangs down the lowest which is most heavily laden with fruit, so in the Church the ripest saints are those who walk humbly with God. The humble man is the most susceptible to compassion and genuine in its practical manifestation. The proud man is too full of himself to feel for others; he is always dissatisfied, always embroiling in quarrels the family, the Church, the social circle where he resides. The humblest man is the bravest man. He endures with composure the contempt and arrogance of others.

IV. **That the Christian character is distinguished by a gentle and patient spirit.**—"Meekness, longsuffering" (ver. 12).

1. *The Christian spirit is gentle.*—"Meekness." This grace indicates what should be our conduct towards others in their treatment of us. Meekness is evidenced in modesty of countenance, gentleness of manner, softness of voice,

and mildness of language; it is opposed to rudeness or harshness. We see it exemplified in the way in which Gideon pacified the irascible men of Ephraim (Judg. viii. 2). It is slow to take, and scorns to give, offence.

2. *The Christian spirit is patient.*—"Longsuffering," which is meekness continued, though subjected to the fiercest provocations. It is opposed to resentment, revenge, wrath. Meekness exercises itself in matters of chagrin, impertinence, folly; longsuffering in those of violent outrage, affront, injury. Meekness may be required by the mere *manner* of others towards us; longsuffering is often necessary by their *conduct*. There is a difference between enduring long and longsuffering. The genuine grace is accompanied, not only with patience, but with joyous activity and watchfulness. It is not like the senseless rock which endures the full force of the storm unmoved and unresponsive, but like the nimble vessel that, while it bends to the tempest, is at the same time diligently speeding on its mission.

V. **That the Christian character is distinguished by a practical manifestation of a spirit of mutual forbearance and forgiveness.**—1. *Mutual forbearance and forgiveness are to be exercised universally.* "Forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any" (ver. 13). The word "quarrel" is better rendered *complaint*. It takes two to make a quarrel, and of these the Christian should never be one. Whatever occasion of offence may arise, whatever cause of complaint, in any man, under any circumstances, and however just the complaint may appear, forbearance is to be exercised; and even if the forbearance is abused and injury be added, we must forgive. It is never on one side only that the fault exists. It is one another, each in his turn, that gives and receives forbearance. If this were more frequently observed, how many unseemly discords and mischievous separations would be prevented!

2. *The exercise of forgiveness is enforced by the highest example.*—"Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (ver. 13). These words come as an impressive climax, enforcing the duty of forgiveness by the strongest motive. The more difficult the duty, the more powerful should be the arguments urging its performance. The example of Christ is supreme in its authority. What are the injuries committed by others against us compared with the number and enormity of our sins against God? Yet Christ forgave us all, freely, fully, unreservedly, and for ever. The heart that is not moved to forgiveness by such an example is hopelessly incorrigible.

Lessons.—1. *The unity of Christian character is made up of many separate essential graces.* 2. *The condition of things in this world affords ample scope for the exercise of every Christian grace.* 3. *To forgive is at once the most difficult and most Christ-like.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 12. *Christian Humility.*

I. **The nature of this holy temper.**—1. *A humble apprehension of our own knowledge.* The imperfection of our faculties, our fallibility of judgment, when we compare our knowledge with the attainments of others, and a persuasion of the small value of the most exalted knowledge without practical influence. 2. *Of our own goodness.* 3. *Of our independence and wants.* 4. *Of our own rank and station.*

II. **The obligations to cultivate a humble temper.**—1. *It is mentioned in Scripture with peculiar marks of distinction and honour.* The most distinguished promises are made to it. It is a necessary introduction to other graces and duties. 2. *It is a grace which adorns every other virtue and recommends religion to every beholder.* 3. *Is recommended to us by the example of the Author and Finisher of our faith.* 4. *Is a grace that will go with us to heaven.*

Lessons.—1. *Those destitute of this grace have the rudiments of Christianity to learn.* 2. *We should look principally to the temper of our spirits to judge of our humility.* 3. *By it we judge of the improving or declining state of our souls.* —*J. Evans, D.D.*

Ver. 13. *Christian Forgiveness—*

I. **Is exercised where there is mutual forbearance.**

II. **Is the noblest method of ending quarrels.**

III. **Is a Christ-like disposition.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 14.

Love the Perfection of the Christian Character.

Love is the commonest and most potent affection of the human heart. It has been the inexhaustible theme of writers in all ages, in poetry and prose. It has been invested with the bewitching drapery of romance, and exhibited as the instrumental cause of the darkest crimes and of the brightest virtues. The world never tires of learning of its adventures, trials, and victories. While it is ever commonplace, it is ever fresh. It is the perennial force in human life—the first to inspire, the longest to endure, the last to perish. But Christian love—love to Jesus Christ, and to all others for His sake—is not a native-born affection. It does not spring spontaneously from the human heart. It is a gift from God. It is the richest fruit of the new spiritual nature implanted in the believer. It is first to be acquired and then diligently cultivated. The apostle has just described the distinctive garments with which the believer is to be adorned—with a heart of tender compassion, with humility, with a gentle, patient, and forgiving spirit. But in addition to all this, and in order to complete the Christian character, he is to be clothed in a robe which is to cover every other garment, and bind it to its place—a robe whose purity and brightness shall shed a lustre over all the rest.

I. **That love is the prime element in every other grace of the Christian character.**—It is the soul of every virtue and the guarantee of a genuine sincerity. Without love all other graces, according to an old writer, are but *glittering sins.* There is a great power of affectionateness in the human heart, but no man possesses naturally the spiritual love of God and love of the race. It is a fruit of the Holy Ghost, and comes through that faith which works by love. It is possible to assume all the essentials of the Christian character, enumerated in ver. 12, and previously commented on; but without love they would be meaningless, cold, and dead. Mercy would degenerate into weak sentimentality; kindness into foolish extravagance; humility into a mock self-depreciation—which is but another form of the proudest egotism; and longsuffering into a dull, dogged stupidity. Love is the grand element in which all other graces move and from which they derive their vitality and value. It is the grace which alone redeems all other from the curse of selfishness, and is, itself, the most unselfish.

II. **That love occupies the most exalted place in the Christian character.**—"Above all these things." Not simply in addition to, but *over and above* all these, put on charity, as the outer garment that covers and binds together all the rest. Other graces are local and limited in their use; love is all-expansive and universal. A philosopher, in a vein of pungent satire, has dilated on the philosophy of clothes; and experience testifies how mightily the world is influenced and instructed by outward appearances. As the dress frequently indicates the rank and importance of the wearer, so the garment of love, worn without ostentation or pride, is the badge by which the Christian is known in the world (John xiii. 35). Love is the presiding queen over all Christian graces, inspiring and harmonising their exercises, and developing them into a living and

beauteous unity of character. The apostle fixes the exalted rank of love in 1 Cor. xiii. 13.

III. **That love is the pledge of permanency in the Christian character.**—"Which is the bond of perfectness." As a girdle, or cincture, bound together with firmness and symmetry the loose flowing robes generally worn by the ancients, so love is the power that unites and holds together all those graces and virtues which together make up perfection. Love is the preservative force in the Christian character. Without it knowledge would lose its enterprise, mercy and kindness become languid, humility faint, and longsuffering indifferent. Love binds all excellencies together in a bond which time cannot injure, the enemy unloose, or death destroy. No church, or community of individuals, can exist long without the sustaining power of love. It is not a similarity in taste, intellectual pursuits, in knowledge, or in creed, that can permanently unite human hearts, but the all-potent sympathy of Christian love. Charity never faileth.

IV. **That the perfection of the Christian character is seen in the practical manifestation of love.**—"Put on charity."

1. *Love is indispensable.*—It is possible to possess many beautiful traits of character—much that is humane and amiable—without being a complete Christian: to be very near perfection, and yet lack one thing. Without love all other graces are inconsistent, heartless, wayward, selfish. They are but as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Charity is indispensable to give life, force, meaning, truth, permanence to the whole. It supplies the imperfections and defects of other graces and virtues.

2. *Love is susceptible of individual cultivation.*—It may be "put on." We may have more if we strive after it and faithfully use what is already possessed. It is a pressing, practical duty which all Christians are bound to attend to. And yet there is no grace which is more constantly suppressed. What a power the Church would become, and how marvellously would the character of the world be changed, if love had a freer scope and was universally exercised. The pretentious coverings of sectarianism and bigotry would vanish, and the whole Church of the redeemed be girt with the ample robe of a seamless unity. To win the love of others we must put it on ourselves.

Lessons.—1. *The mere profession of Christianity is empty and valueless.* 2. *Every grace of the Christian character must be diligently exercised.* 3. *Above and through all other graces love must operate.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 15.

The Rule of Divine Peace.

War in any form is unfriendly to the growth of piety. The soul is tossed on the waves of disquietude, and courage—the principal virtue called into exercise—is apt to acquire an unnatural and unhealthy development at the expense of all other graces. The whole structure of the Christian character is dislocated and thrown off its balance. Peace restores the soul to its true equipoise, fixes every power in its just relation to each other and to the whole, and encourages the harmonious cultivation of that love which is the bond of perfectness. Lord Bacon has said: "It is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in Providence, and turn upon the poles of truth." In this verse we are taught that *the one supreme umpire in the heart, by which all differences are to be settled, is the peace of God—the destined end of the Christian calling, in which is realised the unity belonging to members of one body; and that this blessing is to be sought in a spirit of thankfulness.* Observe:—

I. **That peace is a divine blessing.**—"The peace of God." Some of the oldest

manuscripts here read, "The peace of *Christ*"—a reading adopted by the ablest biblical critics. The verbal difference, however, is of no moment. The truth is the same: it is equally the peace of God and the peace of Christ—a divine tranquillity filling the soul with a calm that no mere worldly power can give or take away, and that the ocean-surges of trouble can never diminish or disturb. Christ hath made peace through the blood of His cross, and left it as a sacred legacy to all His disciples through all time. In its essence it is the peace that Christ Himself enjoys—a sublime calmness similar to that which pervades the divine bosom. It is not like the long, painful, oppressive stillness that is the precursor of a storm, but a profound, pervasive, heavenly quiet that soothes while it invigorates the soul. It proceeds from God through Christ, and is maintained and nourished in the heart as a positive, gracious reality and priceless blessing.

II. **That peace is a ruling power.**—"Let the peace of God rule." The word "rule" is borrowed from the practice of the Greeks at their great national games, and described the duty of the arbiter or umpire presiding, who held the prize in his hand while the contest proceeded in the stadium, and conferred it on the victor at the close. Thereby he exercised over the athletes a peculiar kind of rule. Impelled by a sight of the prize, they gave their whole being to the contest. So, in contending in the race of life, the peace of God, as containing all desirable blessings, is to exercise supreme authority and regulate all the concerns of the soul.

1. *As a ruling power peace pervades and stimulates every other grace.*—It lifts the soul to God, and enables it to take hold of His strength. It prepares for every holy duty, and stimulates to every spiritual enterprise. The more the soul is permeated with divine peace, the more desire and aptitude will there be for higher attainments in piety.

2. *As a ruling power peace is a powerful defence.*—It resists successfully the attacks of evil from whatever source they come. The shafts of infidelity cannot pierce the invulnerable defence of a conscious peace with God: right feeling is superior to the subtlest logic. Peace erects a formidable bulwark against temptation, and is the surest safeguard against every form of sin.

3. *As a ruling power it concentrates and controls all the energies of the soul.*—It calms the intellect, soothes the heart, tranquillises the conscience, and centralises all the powers of manhood, that they may go forth and do valiant battle for the truth. As by an unerring instinct it decides upon what is right, and shuns the wrong. The questions as to whether it is right to engage in certain amusements, to visit certain places, or to join this or that company, will soon be settled when the peace of God rules in the heart. It is a regulating power in moral difficulties, and a potent help in all moral enterprises. The peace of God keeps the heart and mind through Jesus Christ (Phil. iv. 7).

III. **That peace is a ruling power in man.**—"In your hearts." The heart is the region where the ruling power is exercised and takes effect. It embraces the will and affections as distinguished from the intellect. It is the choosing faculty as distinguished from the knowing faculty. When the heart is drawn in one direction the whole man follows. There the moral disease begins, and there the remedy must be applied. By sin the heart has become deceitful above all things; in the regeneration the heart is made new. The rush of an evil heart's affections will not always yield to reason. When God, by His word and Spirit, comes to save, He saves by arresting and renewing the heart. The psalmist recognised this when he cried, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." No man is conquered until his heart is conquered. It is in this region the peace of God has powerful sway, and where it aids in achieving the most brilliant moral conquests.

IV. **That peace is essential to the unity of the Church.**—1. *The Church is called to the enjoyment of peace.* "To the which also ye are called." The burden of the gospel message is *peace.* Its mission is to extinguish wars and enmities, and to pacify heaven and earth. The Church is called to peace by the commands of Christ, by the teachings of His example when on earth, by the reiterated precepts of God's word, and by the necessities of the grand enterprise in which she is engaged.

2. *The enjoyment of peace is essential in preserving and promoting the unity of the Church.*—"In one body." As ye were called as members of one body, so let there be one spirit animating that body. Among the stellar systems, in social communities and states, as well as in the Christian Church, a common agreement is essential to unity. Divine peace preserves harmony, nourishes spiritual strength, and promotes union by drawing the souls, in which it is the ruling power, more closely to God and to each other. There is to be the constant endeavour "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 3).

V. **That peace is to be cultivated in the spirit of thankfulness.**—"And be ye thankful." These words are not to be restricted in their application. Not only do they imply that the Colossians were to act towards each other in a thankful and amiable temper, but they teach in what spirit the peace of God should be universally sought and exercised. The duty of thankfulness was the constant theme of the apostle: there are upwards of thirty references to it in his epistles. Here we are exhorted to consider it in special connection with the enjoyment of peace. Only he who has been swung in the dark whirl of unrest and doubt, who has witnessed the horrible riot of disunion and discord, can appreciate the blessing of peace and the gratitude it inspires. Cicero declared that gratitude was the mother of all other virtues. Certain it is that no man sins without ingratitude. Thanksgiving has always been the principal element in all religion, whether instituted by divine command, prompted by natural reason, or propagated by general tradition. The pagan religion consists in the praise of their gods and acknowledgments of their benefits; the Jewish, to a great extent, in eucharistic oblations and solemn commemorations of providential favours; and the ancient Christians were distinguished by singing hymns to Christ, and by mutual sacraments obliging themselves to abstain from all villainy. Thanksgiving is a joyous exercise—the pleasantest of duties. Prayer reminds us of our wants and imperfections; confession enforces a painful remembrance of our sins; but gratitude includes nothing but the memory of exceeding goodness. It is a duty most acceptable to God and most profitable to man.

Lessons.—1. *True peace is found only in Christ.* 2. *Peace is a mighty engine of spiritual power.* 3. *Gratitude should combine with every blessing.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSE.

Unity and Peace.

I. **The unity of the Church of Christ.**—1. *Distinguish the unity of comprehensiveness from the unity of mere singularity.* 2. *It subsists between things not similar or alike, but dissimilar or unlike.* 3. *It is made up of dissimilar members, without which dissimilarity there could be no unity.* 4. *It consists in submission to one single influence or spirit.* The Spirit of its God.

II. **The individual peace resulting from this unity.**—1. *It is God's peace.* 2. *A living peace.* 3. *The peace which comes from an inward power.* 4. *The peace of reception.*—*Robertson.*

The Peace of God ruling in the Heart.

I. **The region.**—"In your hearts." When the heart is drawn in one direction, the whole man follows. When God by His word and Spirit comes to save, He saves by arresting the heart and making it new.

II. **The reign.**—"Rule." Freedom from rule is not competent to man; the only choice he has is a choice of masters.

III. **The Ruler.**—"The peace of God." 1. *It is God and no idol that should rule in a human heart.* 2. *It is not the wrath but the peace of God that rules in a human heart.* It is the act of letting me go free that binds my whole soul for ever.—*W. Arnot.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 16.

The Poetry of the Christian Life.

In the life of the individual and of nations the era of poetry comes first, and is followed by the era of criticism. The impulse of a youthful and enthusiastic passion and the boundless play of a prolific imagination produce certain artistic results; and then comes the cool, reflective critic, with microscopic eye and mathematical rules, to measure and appraise the loved production. How soon the glowing efflorescence withers, and the expanding magnitude dwindles to the smallest practical limits. Genuine poetry is superior to all criticism, outlives the most violent opposition, and is imperishable as humanity. Poetry is the language of the soul in its highest and holiest mood, when it is fired with a divinely kindled rapture, when it strives to grasp the invisible and pants to express the grandest truths of the universe. The Christian life has its poetry. It is of the loftiest order, its theme the noblest, and its melody haunts the soul for ever with strains of ravishing harmony. In this verse we learn that *the poetry of the Christian life draws its inspiration from the divine word and ministers to the culture and enjoyment of the Church.* Observe:—

I. **That the poetry of the Christian life draws its deepest inspiration from the divine word.**—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

1. *That the divine word is fitly called the word of Christ.*—It contains the record of His personal teaching—the revelation of new and startling truths, and the resetting of old truths in such a light as to connect the old and new dispensations, and blend them in an unbroken homogeneousness. It unfolds the mystery of that redemption He died to accomplish, and which forms so prominent a part of the teaching of this epistle. It is inspired by the Spirit of Christ, and gleams in every part with brilliant manifestations of His supernal glory. Christ is the all-pervading theme of the Scriptures—the key of the arch—the corner-stone of the foundation—the sun, illuminating with light and salvation the whole gospel system to its remotest circumference.

2. *The divine word to create a true poetic fervour must wholly occupy the soul.*—"Dwell in you richly." The word of Christ is to be embraced as a whole, and due prominence given to every part of His character and work. Not to exalt His humanity to the denial of His divinity; not to be so enamoured with the moral beauty of His life as to overlook the significance and power of His death. The word is to dwell in us so completely as to possess and enrich every faculty and power of our nature. Not simply to give it a place in the region of intellectual opinion or in judging of moral questions, but to let it have a mighty sway over the affections of the heart—let it enter, saturate, purify, and govern the whole mental, moral, and spiritual being. It is to occupy the soul as a constant and permanent inspiration; to *dwell*—not as a stranger to stand without, or be saluted at a distance, but to enter, to abide, and be treated as a loved and intimate guest. Let the word of Christ be clearly apprehended, diligently pondered, and firmly grasped, and it will fill the soul with heavenly visions and inflame it with the holiest poetic ardour.

II. **That the poetry of the Christian life has made valuable literary contributions to the psalmody of the Church.**—"In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." It is not easy to make arbitrary distinctions between these poetic

effusions. The *psalm* was a sacred poem on whatever subject, and similar to the productions in the book of Psalms in the Old Testament; the *hymn* specially celebrated the praises of the Almighty; and the *spiritual song*, or ode, was more mixed in its matter and more artificial in its arrangement, and referred to personal effusions of a more general character. The gift of poesy was among the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit in the early Church (1 Cor. xiv. 26). The first form of literature in all countries is for the most part in song. A certain writer has said, that if he were allowed to make the songs of a nation, he cared not who made the laws. And in the Christian Church, from the earliest period, sacred psalmody has been a mighty power for edification and comfort. The hymnology of the Church is becoming increasingly rich in its poetic treasures.

III. **That the poetry of the Christian life ministers to the mutual culture and happiness of the Church.**—1. *It is intellectual in its character.* "In all wisdom teaching one another." A more correct punctuation connects the clause "in all wisdom" with the words that follow, not, as in our version, with the words that precede. To teach in all wisdom demands the highest intellectual exercise, especially when poetry is the medium of instruction and the word of Christ the theme. Without wisdom, poetry would sink into a maudlin sensuousness, a mere verbal jingling, an intolerable monotony. Wisdom is necessary to compare and balance the different parts of Scripture truth, to apply the word on proper occasions to its proper ends and in harmony with its spirit, and to adopt the best means for attaining the highest results in mutual instruction. The profoundest feelings of our nature can only be expressed in poetry. The orator, as he reaches the loftiest strains of eloquence, becomes poetical.

2. *It is moral in its tendency.*—"And admonishing one another." There is implied a deep concern for each other's moral condition and safety. The poetry of the early Christians was moral in its exercise and tendency. No one can feel an interest in another's morality who is himself immoral. An eminent critic has said: "The element in which poetry dwells is truth, and when imagination divorces itself from that relation, it declines into the neighbourhood of empty fiction or the dreams of lunacy." The poetry of the Christian life is based on eternal truth, and it is to be judiciously used as an instrument of admonition as well as of instruction. There is need for warning and brotherly counsel to restore the wanderer, to raise him if he has fallen, to reprove him if he is wrong, to protect and admonish him if he is in danger (Ps. cxli. 5).

3. *It is joyous in its effects.*—"Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Music and poetry are sometimes prostituted to the basest purposes, ministering to the lowest passions, and inciting to the vilest actions. But the poetry of the Christian life refines the soul, raises it towards God, and fills it with the music of unspeakable delight. The proper sphere of music is the heavenly and the spiritual.

> "Beyond the visible world she soars to seek,
> For what delights the sense is false and weak;
> Ideal form, the universal mould."

As the sea-shell conveys to the ear the faint music of the distant waves, so the poetry of the Christian life indicates in some degree the rapturous music that awaits us on the heavenly shore. Coleridge said: "Poetry has been to me its own exceeding great reward. It has soothed my affliction, it has endeared solitude, and it has given me the habit of wishing to discover the good and beautiful in all that surrounds me." And Keats said: "Let me have music dying, and I seek no more delight."

Lessons.—1. *The highest poetry is found in the divine word.* 2. *To administer instruction and admonition through the medium of song is at once modest and significant.* 3. *The Christian life should be one sweet harmonious poem.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSE.

The Word of Christ: its Characteristics as the Saviour's Book and the Sinner's Book.

I. **It is simple.**
II. **Significant.**
III. **Saving.**
IV. **Sanctifying.**
V. **Supporting.**
VI. **Suited to all.**

Lessons.—1. *Let its truths and realities inhabit your convictions.* 2. *Let its tone be infused into your temper.* 3. *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.*—*James Hamilton, D.D.*

The Indwelling Word of Christ.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you.—1. *Implies a sense of the preciousness of Christ Himself.* 2. *The preciousness of Christ's words, as well as of Christ Himself, is essential to its dwelling in you.* 3. *The felt preciousness of real present and living intercourse between Christ and you will cause the word, as His word, to abide in you.*

II. **Dwell in you richly.**—1. *It may refer to quantity.* 2. *It may have respect to quality.* 3. *This rich indwelling of the word of Christ in you may be held to correspond to the riches of Him whose word it is.* 4. *It is to dwell in you not only as rich receivers but as rich dispensers also.*

Lessons.—1. *Make sure of the first condition of Christ's word in you—the preciousness of Christ Himself.* 2. *Make full proof of all suitable helps for the indwelling of the word of Christ in you.*—*R. S. Candlish.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 17.

Suggestive Summary of the Law of Christian Duty.

Labour, which was originally imposed on man as a curse, may minister very largely to the increase of human happiness. The effort necessary to contend with and subdue the hostile forces of nature, and wrest from the earth the food essential to existence, strengthens and elevates the best powers of man. All men are prompted to labour by some distinct principle or ruling passion: the savage by the cravings of physical hunger, the patriot by the love of his country, the philosopher by an inextinguishable thirst for knowledge and delight in intellectual exercises. The ruling principle of action in the believer is that of supreme devotion to the Lord; he is to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus. This exhortation embraces everything previously mentioned in the epistle, and every possible duty of the Christian life.

I. **The guiding law of Christian duty.**—"Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus." The name of Christ suggests the predominating principle by which the whole course of life is to be regulated, the watchword in every enterprise, the battle-cry in every conflict, the rallying centre in every disaster. In warfare, as in other things, a name is often a powerful spell to conjure with, and vast armies have been animated with the enthusiasm of action by simply mentioning the name of a Wellington, a Napoleon, a Garibaldi, a Von Moltke. But oh! how glorious and all-potent is the name **Lord Jesus!** It suggests the sublime dignity and redemptive achievements of Christ, and that He is the great exemplar after which all who believe in Him are to be morally fashioned.

1. *In Christ is the purest motive to duty.*—Motive originates and governs action, and makes it good or bad. The believer does everything for Christ's sake, out of love for Him and respect to His authority. The tendency in all men is to live in themselves, to act in their own name and strength, and to carry out their own selfish purposes. Selfishness is one of the mightiest and most general motives to action. It is only in Christ we find the holiest and purest motive;

in Him love takes the place of selfishness. The love of Christ constraineth us (2 Cor. v. 14, 15).

2. *In Christ is the noblest pattern of duty.*—Not only do we see in His character the most perfect representation of moral excellence, but His whole career is an instructive example of devotion to duty. He fulfilled the will of His Father: He was obedient unto death. He has taught us how to live and how to die. One of the grandest pictures of moral heroism is seen in the maintenance of an intelligent and faithful obedience in the midst of danger and threatened death.

3. *In Christ is the highest end of duty.*—All things in the material universe exist for Him, and in the moral realm He is the goal towards which all actions tend. Everything should be done with reference to Christ. We can have no worthier ambition than to seek in all things His glory. Cf. Mark ix. 41; Matt. xviii. 5; John xiv. 14; and note how Christ lays it down as a universal principle that everything is to be done in His name. There is no higher name, for it "is above every name"; there is no loftier end, for "He is before all things."

4. *In Christ is the final authority of Christian duty.*—Many things have been done in the name of Christ that never had His sanction and were contrary to His authority. The most disastrous persecutions and cruellest tortures have been perpetrated in the name of Christ. These blasphemous outrages have been committed to strengthen the authority and hide the bloodthirsty rapacity of a corrupt and domineering Church. No ecclesiastical hierarchy has a right to compel the blind, unreasoning submission of a free, intelligent agent. Above all Jesuitical maxims and Papal decrees is the authority of Christ. His will is supreme in all spheres, and that will is the guiding law of duty in the Christian life.

II. **The universal obligation of Christian duty.**—"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed."

1. *There must be a recognition of Christ in everything.*—In all our employments, conversation, public acts of worship, in social and private prayer, in secular and domestic concerns, in all matters relating to the place of our abode, in changing residences, in the connections we form for ourselves and our children. There is a comprehensiveness in this obligation which is all-embracing. Not that we are to parade our piety, to obtrude our religious notions upon everybody we meet, or to be ever unctuously repeating the name of Christ, irrespective of time or place. The merchant is not to provoke unseemly discussions on sacred subjects when he ought to be attending to the business of the counting-house; the clerk should not be reading his Bible when he ought to be posting his ledger; the servant-maid should not be praying when she ought to be cleaning her kitchen; nor ought the mother to be gadding about, or running to endless revival meetings, while her house is dirty and husband and children neglected. It is not so much that everything is to be done after one special outward form as that every duty is to be done in a religious spirit. Religion is not a series of formal acts, or a string of set phrases; but it is a life, pervading all our activities, and making every part of our career sublime. Recognise Christ in everything, and a new meaning will be thrown on passing events; the commonplaces of life will be exalted into dignity, and the future assume irresistible attractions.

2. *There must be absolute dependence on Christ at all times.*—We cannot say and do everything in the name of Christ unless we fully surrender ourselves to Him. We are helpless and full of spiritual infirmities, but the more conscious we are of our complete dependence on Him the stronger are we in labour and in hope. In our successes, lest we be puffed up with vanity—in our perplexities, lest we be discouraged—in our grief, lest we sink despairing into the abyss—and in our transports of joy, lest we be exalted above measure—there must ever be

a full, voluntary, and conscious reliance on Jesus. Thus resting on Him and realising His life-giving power, we can say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

3. *There must be supreme devotion to Christ.*—All we have we owe to Him. He gave His all for us, and it is but a righteous return that we consecrate to Him all that is highest and best in ourselves. We must love Christ supremely, and then every faculty and power of our being will render homage and service to Him. We shall be obedient to His commands, we shall magnify His grace, we shall strive to walk worthy of His great name, and in all things seek to promote His glory. We pledge ourselves to Him for ever, and no consideration should tempt us to relax our devotion. George III. was a man of firm mind, with whom one had pleasure in acting. He was very slow in forming his opinion, very diligent in procuring every information on the subject; but once convinced, he would act with unflinching firmness. His beautiful speech about the Roman Catholic question shows his character: "I can give up my crown and retire from power, I can quit my palace and live in a cottage, I can lay my head on a block and lose my life, but I can *not* break my oath."

III. **The unvarying spirit in which Christian duty is to be done.**—"Giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." They who do all things in Christ's name will never want matter of thanksgiving to God. The apostle has frequently referred to this duty of gratitude, and he evidently regarded it as a very important element of the Christian character. It was Christianity that first taught the duty of being thankful even in trial and suffering. We are to thank God for the privilege of acting so that we may honour Him. A thankful spirit has a blessedness and a power of blessing which those only realise who cherish it. All thanksgiving is to be offered to God the Father by Jesus Christ, as He is our only mediator, and it is through Him we obtain whatever good the Father bestows upon us. The giving of thanks to God is one of the highest duties of religious worship; and if this be done in the name of the Lord Jesus, then all subordinate duties must be done in the same manner.

Lessons.—1. *The name of Christ is the greatest power in the universe.* 2. *All duty gathers its significance and blessedness from its relation to Christ.* 3. *A thankful spirit is happy in enterprise, brave in difficulties, and patient in reverses.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSE.

Ver. 17 (compared with 1 Cor. xi. 24). *The Lord's Supper the Sample of the Christian Life.*

I. **All the objects around us are to be regarded by us as being symbols and memorials of our Lord.**

II. **Every act of our life is to be done from the same motive as that holy communion.**

III. **All life, like the communion of the Lord's Supper, may be and ought to be a showing forth of Christ's death.**

IV. **This communion is in itself one of the mightiest means for making the whole of life like itself.**—*A. Maclaren.*

Doing all in the Name of Christ.

I. **Doing it as His agent.**

II. **We are not our own, but His.**

III. **Whatever it is right to do is His work.**—*T. G. Crippen.*

Christ in the Practical Life.

I. **Here we find a rule of life.**

II. **Here we find a motive.**

III. **Here we find our life redeemed.**

—*Preacher's Magazine.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAGH.—Verses 18, 19.

Duties of Husbands and Wives.

After the apostle has laid down the law of duty for the government of all Christians in the general conduct of life, he proceeds to show the application of the same law to the domestic relationships. Obedience to the law in the general is an excellent preparation for observing it in the particular: the best Christian will make the best husband or wife. The morality of Christianity is one of its brightest glories and most beneficent influences; it provides for the purity and happiness of domestic life, and where it rules all is peace, love, and contentment. Where polygamy prevails, as in heathen and Mahometan countries, the most lamentable domestic complications occur, and all is distraction and misery. The family is the source and pattern of society. If the family is corrupt and disorganised, society suffers. A holy, well-regulated household is a regenerative force in society. It is in the home that the social principle finds its highest development. There the tenderest feelings are roused, the deepest and most permanent impressions made, the foundation and first rough outlines of what we may become laid down and indicated, the first principle of good or evil imbibed, and the mightiest moral forces brought into play. Much, therefore, depends upon the understanding that exists between the husband and wife, and the way in which they discharge their mutual duties, as to what shall be the character of the household government. The apostle, in enforcing these relative duties, mentions the three classes which divide the domestic circle—husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. He begins with the inferior relation in each class—wife, child, servant—perhaps, because the difficulty of obedience is greater, because in disputes it is the duty of the humbler party to submit, and because the discharge of duty by that party is the surest method of securing it in the other.

I. **The duty of the wife is submission to the husband.**—"Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands" (ver. 18).

1. *This implies dependence.*—It is the divine order that "the husband is the head of the wife." In point of nature, and of their relation to God, they are both equal; but when brought into the married relation the husband has the first place, and the wife, as the weaker vessel, and under a sense of dependence, is called to submit. Where the order is reversed, and the wife takes the lead, mischief is sure to ensue. Not that woman is to be the slave and drudge of her husband; but the relationship between the two ought to be so adjusted by the power of religion that the wife is never rudely reminded of her state of dependence.

2. *Implies respect.*—It is difficult to respect some men, and still more difficult to love where we cannot respect. But the apostolic injunction is emphatic: "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband." Though the husband be a reckless, incapable ne'er-do-well, the wife is to respect the position of her husband and show him deference as the head of the family. Alas! how many a noble woman has had her life embittered by a worthless husband, but who, with a heroism, truly sublime, and a love truly angelical, has bravely done her duty and striven to screen the faults of the man who caused her misery.

3. *Implies obedience in all things lawful.*—St. Peter refers to "the holy women in the old time, being in subjection unto their own husbands, even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord" (1 Pet. iii. 5, 6). A true wife is wholly devoted to her husband. She will care for his person, property, health, character, and reputation, as for her own. In all things reasonable and lawful she will rejoice to meet the requests of her husband and follow his counsel.

II. **The submission of the wife to the husband is governed by religious**

principle.—"As it is fit in the Lord" (ver. 18). The wife is first to submit herself fully to Christ, and, from love to Him, to submit herself to her own husband, and to look upon her subjection as service done to Christ. This will be a consolation and strength to her in many an unkind word from a cruel, apathetic, and unappreciative husband. It would never do for two wills to be ruling a family. There would be endless clashing and confusion. It is the divine arrangement that the husband is the head of the house, and "it is fit in the Lord" that the wife should be in subjection. She is not to forget her responsibility to God in a slavish, unreasoning, and sinful obedience to her husband. Governed by a pure and lofty religious principle, she may so fulfil her duty as to win, or at least disarm, her unreasonable partner. A wise submission may sometimes work wonders. She stoops to conquer. An old writer has said: "A wife is ordained for man, like a little Zoar—a city of refuge to fly to in all his troubles."

III. **The duty of the husband is to show affection towards the wife.**—1. *This affection is to be genuinely manifested.* "Husbands, love your wives" (ver. 19). Obligation is not all on one side. The husband is not less bound to discharge his duty to his wife than the wife to him. Love is the sum of the husband's duty, and that which will regulate every other. Where love rules, the family circle becomes a tranquil and cherished haven of rest, peace, harmony, and joy. Nor is it enough that this affection should be recognised as a matter of course—let it be manifested. That woman is a strange, heartless shrew who is unaffected by the gentle evidences of a devoted and manly love. The true wife needs, craves for, and knows how to appreciate a genuine and evident affection. Let the husband show the same tender and considerate regard to his wife as life advances and cares multiply as when he stood by her side at the altar, a lovely and confiding bride.

2. *This affection is to be free from harshness.*—"And be not bitter against them" (ver. 19). It is evidently implied that the love of a Christian heart may be marred by a sour and morose temper. It is ungenerous and cruel to vent upon his wife and family the anger which the man had not the courage to display before those who roused it when mixing among them in the world. Bitterness may be manifested as much by a cold, repulsive silence as by the most stinging words of sharp and angry reproof, or by the irritating actions of a wilful and tantalising conduct. It is a species of savage and fiendish brutality for a husband to study how he can inflict the keenest torture on a loving and submissive nature. It sometimes requires the most assiduous art of the tenderest affection to repair the damage done by a single word. Amid the perplexities and trials of married life many occasions will arise in which mutual patience and forbearance will need to be exercised. Let love reign supreme, and banish the first symptoms of a harsh and churlish disposition.

Lessons.—1. *Be careful whom you marry.* 2. *Beware of the first quarrel.* 3. *Bear with Christian resignation the life-consequences of an unfortunate choice.* 4. *Connubial bliss is attained only by the faithful exercise of mutual duties.*

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

Duties of Parents and Children.

It is God who hath set the solitary in families. The domestic constitution is the formal type of all governments. If discipline is neglected in the home, it is rarely that the loss is made up when the untaught becomes a citizen of the world. Coleridge has well said: "If you bring up your children in a way which puts them out of sympathy with the religious feelings of

the nation in which they live, the chances are that they will ultimately turn out ruffians or fanatics, and one as likely as the other." "A wise son maketh a glad father; but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother" (Prov. x. 1). Lord Bacon observes that fathers have most comfort of the good proof of their sons, but the mothers have most discomfort of their ill proof. It is therefore of vital importance that the reciprocal duties of parents and children should be faithfully and diligently observed. These verses indicate *the character of filial duty and of parental authority.* Observe:—

I. **That the duty of the child to the parent is to obey.**—1. *This obedience is universal.* "Children, obey your parents in all things" (ver. 20). The Old Testament law commands, "Honour thy father and thy mother"; and the most signal way in which a child can honour his parents is to obey them. Parents have learnt wisdom by experience; they know the dangers that threaten their children, and are in a position to offer wise and judicious counsel. Filial obedience should be prompt, cheerful, self-denying, uniform; not dilatory and reluctant. It is universal in its obligation, and is binding, not only in those commands that are pleasant to obey, but in those that are troublesome, and that seem unreasonable and perverse, so long as they do not involve a violation of divine law. It is a painful spectacle to see a child defy parental authority, and even exult in his rebellion and in the distress it causes his father and mother. But filial disobedience rarely reaches such a pitch of cruel retaliation without there having been some defect in the early training. The child who renders due reverence to his parents is sure to meet with the rich rewards of heaven in the enjoyment of temporal and spiritual blessing.

2. *This obedience is qualified and limited by the divine approval.*—"For this is well-pleasing unto God" (ver. 20). It is only when the commands of the parent are in harmony with the will of God that the child is bound to obey, and a powerful motive to practise obedience is derived from the fact that it "is well-pleasing unto the Lord." The parent has no authority to enforce obedience beyond what has been given to him of God; and the exercise of that authority must ever be in subjection to the higher authority of the divine law. Obedience to parents in what is right is obedience to the Lord. It is the way of safety and of happiness. A little boy, about seven years old, was on a visit to a lady who was very fond of him. One day, at breakfast, there was some hot bread on the table, and it was handed to him; but he would not take it. "Do you not like hot bread?" asked the lady. "Yes," said the boy; "I like it very much." "Then, my dear, why do you do not take some?" "Because," he said, "my father does not wish me to eat hot bread." "But your father is a great way off," said the lady, "and will not know whether you eat it or not. You may take it for once; there will be no harm in that." "No, ma'am; I will not disobey my father and my mother. I must do what they have told me to do, although they are a great way off. I would not touch it if I was sure nobody would see me. I myself should know it, and that would be enough to make me unhappy." A reckless disobedience of parental authority will not go unpunished. The example of Christ's subjection to his earthly parents exalts filial duty into a sublime and holy exercise.

II. **That the duty of the parent to the child is to rule.**—1. *The parent is not to rule in a spirit of exasperating severity.* "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger" (ver. 21). The obedience of the child will be very much influenced by the character of the parental government. Counsel, remonstrance, and even chastisement will be necessary in the successful training of children. But discipline is to be administered so wisely, lovingly, and firmly as not to irritate to rebellion, but to subdue and bend into obedience. An excessive severity is as baneful as an excessive indulgence.

"The voice of parents is the voice of God,
For to their children they are heaven's lieutenants;
Made fathers, not for common uses merely,
But to steer
The wanton freight of youth through storms and dangers,
Which, with full sails, they bear upon and straighten
The mortal line of life they bend so often.
For these are we made fathers, and for these
May challenge duty on our children's part.
Obedience is the sacrifice of angels,
Whose form you carry."—*Shakespeare.*

2. *To rule in a spirit of exasperating severity tends only to dishearten.*—"Lest they be discouraged" (ver. 21). If the child sees that all his endeavours to please are in vain, and that he is repulsed with sternness and cruel severity, he loses heart, and becomes sullen or morose, or is stung into a state of desperate revenge. To be perpetually fault-finding, and to gratify your angry passions in brutal, savage chastisement, will crush the spirit of any youth, and perhaps transform him into a monster more terrible than yourself. Children are to be led, not driven; to be treated as reasonable beings, not forced like brute animals; to be encouraged by commendation where it is merited, and the defects of their obedience kindly interpreted. A certain writer has significantly said: "What if God should place in your hand a diamond, and tell you to inscribe on it a sentence which should be read at the last day, and shown there as an index of your own thoughts and feelings? What care, what caution, would you exercise in the selection! Now this is what God has done. He has placed before you the immortal minds of your children, more imperishable than the diamond, on which you are about to inscribe every day and every hour, by your instruction, by your spirit, or by your example, something that will remain and be exhibited for or against you at the judgment-day."

Lessons.—1. *To rule wisely we must first learn to obey.* 2. *Disobedience is the essence of all sin.* 3. *That government is the most effective that tempers justice with mercy.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 22-25—*Ch.* iv. 1.

Duties of Masters and Servants.

The jealous conflict between capital and labour threatens the good understanding that was wont to exist between employer and employed with a serious rupture. Such a rupture would benefit neither side and would inflict incalculable disaster on both. There are economic laws, which regulate the employment of capital and labour, which no number of combinations and unions among masters and servants can ever set aside. Though a temporary advantage may, in extraordinary times, be snatched by either party, the law of supply and demand inevitably tends to balance and equalise all interests. It would be well, therefore, for masters and servants to ponder the teaching of the New Testament regarding their reciprocal duties. It was Christianity that rescued the servant from a condition of abject civil slavery, and placed him in his just relation to his fellow-subjects in the commonwealth. The farther men drift away from the Christian spirit in seeking to adjust the questions between capital and labour, the more difficult and complicated they become. It is only as these questions are settled on a Christian basis, in harmony with the laws of a sound political economy, that party jealousies will subside, and the best understanding between masters and servants be established. Observe:—

I. That the duty of the servant is to obey his master in all things relating to his state of servitude.—"Servants, obey in all things your masters according to

the flesh" (ver. 22). There is nothing degrading in service. It is the employment of angels. "They serve Him day and night." It is ennobled by the example of Christ, who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." To obey in all things is not always pleasant or easy; but the Christian servant will strive to accomplish the task. He consults the master's will, not his own; he does the master's way, not his own; he considers the master's time, not his own. His obedience is universally binding in everything relating to his state of servitude, but is restricted to that. His employer is his master only according to the flesh, has control over his bodily powers, and over the time in which he has engaged to labour; but he has not power over the spirit. The master cannot demand obedience in any matter forbidden of God.

II. **That the duty of the servant is to be done in a spirit of sincerity.**—1. *It is to be free from duplicity.* "Not with eye-service as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart" (ver. 22). The servants of whom the apostle writes were slaves, and treated merely as chattels. There are supposed to have been sixty millions of slaves in the Roman empire. From the treatment they usually received, they were greatly tempted to be merely eye-servants—diligent when their master was present, but indolent and reckless in his absence. Christianity has elevated man from slavery, and provided him with the highest motives to moral action. It teaches that service is to be rendered, not with a hypocritical deference and sham industriousness, but with a single, undivided heart, doing the best at all times for the master.

2. *It is to be done in the fear of God.*—"Fearing God"—the one Lord and Master, as contrasted with the master according to the flesh. The Christian servant has a conscience to satisfy and a heavenly Master to please. The fear of the Lord is the holiest motive-power in all acceptable service. He who serves his earthly master as he seeks to serve God will take care that the divine and human interests do not come into collision with each other.

III. **That the duty of the servant is to be discharged from the loftiest religious principle.**—1. *In every duty God is to be recognised.* "And whatsoever ye do, do it as to the Lord, and not unto men" (ver. 23). The Christian servant must look higher than his earthly master; that is a service that may be rendered mechanically, and by men who make no pretence to be Christian. The true servant will give Christ the chief place in his service—will so act that his obedience shall honour Christ and be acceptable to Him. His best efforts may fail to satisfy the exactions of an unreasonable master, and the faithful servant will find his consolation and recompense in the fact that he aims to secure the divine approval. This will give a moral dignity to the most menial employment, and exalt the common drudgery of toil into a means of religious refreshment and invigoration.

2. *In every duty the best powers should be exercised.*—"Do it heartily" (ver. 23). If the heart be engaged, it will put into operation the best powers of the whole man. No work is well done when the heart is not in it. Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well; and surely no power can move the springs of action so completely as the ever-present thought that, whatever we do, we "do it as to the Lord, and not unto men." Our best efforts fall immeasurably below the lofty ideal of Christian service; but it is no small commendation when the divine Master can declare respecting the anxious and delighted worker, "He hath done what he could." Acting on such a principle, the capacity for the highest kind of work is cultivated, the sphere of usefulness widened, and the most coveted honours and enjoyments of the faithful servant secured.

IV. **That faithful service will meet with a glorious reward.**—"Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance, for ye serve the Lord Christ" (ver. 24). Under the sinister judgment passed by Satan on the devotion

of Job there lurks an encouraging truth—man does not serve God for nought. Though there is nothing meritorious in the best actions of the busiest life, yet it has pleased God, in the exuberance of His condescending bounty, to provide abundant recompense for all work done as unto Him. The reward of the inheritance is in generous disproportion to the service rendered; the service is marred and limited by the numberless imperfections of the human; the reward is amply freighted with the overflowing munificence and glittering splendours of the divine. It is the inheritance of imperishable happiness—of incorruptible and unfading glory—of heaven—of God. What an encouragement to work!

V. **That every act of injustice will meet with impartial retribution.**—"But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, and there is no respect of persons" (ver. 25). Some regard the wrong-doer referred to in this verse as the servant who defrauds the master of his service; others, as the master who defrauds the servant of his just recompense. But the words announce a general principle which is equally applicable to both. The philosophers of Greece taught, and the laws of Rome assumed, that the slave was a chattel, and that as a chattel he had no rights. The New Testament places the relation of master and servant in a wholly new light, and shows that between both there is a reciprocity of duties and of penalties. The injustice done in the world, whether by master or by servant, shall be impartially redressed, and the injured one vindicated at the day of final retribution.

VI. **That the duty of the master is to deal righteously towards his servants.**—1. *He is to act towards his servants according to the principles of justice and equity.* "Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal" (ver. 1). If the masters here addressed were exhorted to deal fairly and justly with those who were their slaves, not less fully is the modern master bound to act justly and equitably towards those who serve him. The position of the master is one of great power and authority; it is, at the same time, one of solemn responsibility. Capital has not only its cares and privileges, it has also its duties, and these cannot be abused with impunity. The communistic doctrine of equality has no countenance here. If all were socially and financially equal to-day, the inequality would be restored to-morrow. The duty of the master is to give to his servants that which is righteous and reciprocally fair. Treat them as human beings, with human rights, and as rational and religious beings, who, like yourselves, have an endless future to prepare for. Give them fair remuneration for work done. Be generous in prosperous times, and considerate when adversity comes. While acting commercially according to the laws of political economy, which no sane business man can disregard, yield in all justness and fairness to the impulse of the higher law of Christian charity and kindness. Interest yourselves in the physical, moral, and religious welfare of your work-people. Good masters make good servants.

2. *He is to remember that he is responsible to a higher Master.* "Knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven" (ver. 1). The master is not less bound than the servant to do his duty as unto the Lord. They are both servants of the one great Lord and Master of all. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." Do not impose impossible tasks upon your servants. Avoid an overbearing tyranny, and "forbear threatening." Exercise your authority with humanity and gentleness. Use your wealth, reputation, and influence in promoting the best interest of your work-people, and in serving the Lord Christ. Remember that whatever you do to the poorest servant of your heavenly Master is reckoned and recompensed as done to Himself.

Lessons.—1. *Social distinctions afford opportunities for personal discipline.* 2. *Every rank in life has its special perils.* 3. *The law of duty is binding in all ranks.* 4. *The dust of both masters and servants will soon mingle in a common grave.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 23. *Do all for God.*

I. **The Christian's practical life comprises working, acting, and suffering.**

II. **Abide with God in your calling.**—Intention gives a moral character to actions.

III. **Motives to duty.**—1. *Mechanical activity.* 2. *Supernatural motive.* "Do it heartily as to the Lord." 3. *Our good intention should be renewed at intervals.* 4. *Our lesser actions should be brought under the control of Christian principle.—E. M. Goulburn.*

A Hearty Christianity.

I. **The highest end of all work is work done for God and to God.**—1. *Not work done for self.* 2. *Not work done for society.*

II. **The highest kind of work of which we are capable is that which engages all the powers of our spiritual nature.**—"Do it heartily." 1. *The character of the work we do will be decided by the state of our heart.* 2. *By the predominating impulse of the heart.* 3. *The character of our work as a whole will be influenced by the heartiness we throw into every single duty.* "Whatsoever ye do."

Lessons.—1. *A hearty Christianity is a happy Christianity.* 2. *Is not easily daunted by difficulties.* 3. *Is aggressive.*

Vers. 23-25. *Piety in the Household.*

I. **We are serving the Lord.**—This will dignify the most insignificant duty.

II. **We should seek to be actuated by the highest possible motive.**—Out of the heart, or influenced by the affections. The highest motive will cover the lowest.

III. **The Lord Himself will give us the highest reward.**—With Him is no respect of persons.—*Homiletic Monthly.*

CHAPTER IV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 2. **Watch in the same.**—"Being wakeful." Here again the apostle changes his language from that used in enjoining the same precepts in Ephesians. Remaining sleepless (Eph. vi. 18) is the same thing as being wakeful.

Ver. 3. **A door of utterance.**—R.V. "a door for the word." The word of God cannot be bound, though its messenger may; but St. Paul can scarcely think its being glorified comes so quickly as it would if he had liberty to preach it. "An open door" with "many adversaries" is more to St. Paul's mind than the *custodia libera.* See Eph. vi. 19, 20.

Ver. 5. **Walk in wisdom.**—Eph. v. 15. Walk circumspectly. R.V. "carefully." It would appear from this as if the adverb in Eph. v. 15 should go with "walk" rather than with "look," as in R.V. **Toward them that are without.**—Who do not participate in the benefits of the new kingdom. **Redeeming the time.**—As in Eph. v. 16. Seizing for yourselves, like bargains in the market, each opportunity (see R.V. margin).

Ver. 6. **Let your speech be alway with grace.**—There is no excuse for a Christian's conversation becoming rude and churlish. It may be necessary to speak plainly and boldly at times—the way of doing even that graciously ought to characterise Christians. **Seasoned with salt.**—The pungent flavour of wit and facetiousness was called salt by the Greeks, often with a spice of indecency. "Salt" in the New Testament is the opposite of corruption.

Ver. 11. **A comfort to me.**—The word for "comfort" is only found in this place in the New Testament. It is a medical term, and points to relief given in suffering—then, by way of ministering to a mind diseased or in trouble, is used of the speech which soothes and calms.

Ver. 12. **Always labouring fervently for you.**—R.V. "always striving." Lit. "agonising." Like the mighty wrestler who held the Angel till daybreak, Epaphras intercedes for his Colossian brethren. **Complete in all the will of God.**—R.V. "fully assured." "From the

tenor of the letter it appears that the Colossians needed a deeper Christian insight and more intelligent and well-grounded convictions respecting the truth 'as in Jesus'" (*Findlay*).

Ver. 13. **Zeal . . . for them that are in Laodicea.**—Here then is one who differs from the Laodicean spirit of St. John's time.

Ver. 17. **And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry.**—He is again closely connected with Colossæ in the epistle to Philemon. A monition perhaps needed by Archippus. **In the Lord.**—The element in which every work of the Christian, and especially the Christian minister, is to be done.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 2—4.

The Efficacy of Prayer.

Prayer is a supreme necessity of the soul. It is the cry of conscious want, an outlet for the pent-up feelings, and a mighty engine of power in all spiritual enterprises. It is the holiest exercise of the believer, his solace in trouble, his support in weakness, the solver of his doubts and perplexities, his safety in peril, his unfailing resource in adversity, his balance in prosperity, his weapon in every conflict. It is the key which opens the door of the heavenly treasury, and places at his disposal the boundless wealth of the divine beneficence. The efficacy of prayer does not terminate in the individual petitioner, but extends to others on whose behalf supplication is made. God hears the cry of the believing suppliant, and in some way, not always explicable to us, but in harmony with His divine perfections and the fitness of things, answers and blesses. The apostle knew the value and power of prayer when earnestly and humbly exercised, and, after giving directions concerning the discharge of certain specific relative duties, he returns, in concluding this epistle, to some general admonitions in which this important duty holds a foremost place. Prayer, says Thomas Aquinas, should have three qualities: it should be assiduous, watchful, and grateful. The perseverance with which prayer uninterruptedly draws itself through all events, internal and external, like a thread, or encircles them like a chain, is its vital power; the watchfulness, the lively circumspection, the gratitude, are the quiet tone or firm basis of the same.

I. **That prayer to be efficacious must be earnest and unceasing.**—"Continue in prayer" (ver. 2). The heart must be in the duty and all the best powers of the man put forth. That in which we have no interest will stir no feeling, will challenge no effort. To repeat a verbal formulary is not prayer. Alas! how many thousand prayers go no farther than the sound they make, and are as useless! Genuine prayer involves thought, diligent inquiry, passionate entreaty, unwearied perseverance. The highest blessings of the Christian life, the brightest visions of God, the deepest insight into truth, the most enravishing ecstasies of the soul, are obtained only by fervent and persistent wrestling. Prayer must be offered with close-cleaving constancy, as the word "continue" implies, and with daily frequency. Let prayer be the key of the morning and the bolt of the evening.

II. **That prayer to be efficacious must be joined with vigilance.**—"And watch in the same" (ver. 2). Long, prosy, spiritless prayers lull the soul into a dangerous slumber; and without incessant watchfulness all prayers are apt to become long, prosy, and spiritless. It is not necessary we should rob ourselves of needful sleep in order to spend so many hours in formal devotion. The vigilance refers to the spirit and manner in which all prayer is to be offered. There may be times when, under the pressure of some great solicitude, the soul is drawn out in prayer so as to preclude sleep; but at these times the quality of watchfulness is often in most vigorous operation. Watch, as a sentinel suspecting the approach of an enemy; as a physician attending to all the symptoms of a disease; as the keeper of a prison watching an insidious and treacherous criminal. We have need to watch against the temptations arising

from worldly associations, from the sinfulness of our own hearts, and from the vile insinuations of the enemy, all which mar the efficacy of our prayers. Chrysostom says, "The devil knoweth how great a good prayer is." No wonder he should seek to distract the mind of the earnest suppliant. "Prayer," said Bernard, "is a virtue that prevaileth against all temptations;" but this is so only when a sleepless vigilance is exercised.

III. **That prayer to be efficacious must be mingled with gratitude.**—"With thanksgiving" (ver. 2). The apostle has, throughout the epistle, repeatedly enforced the duty of thankfulness. He once more recurs to it in this place; and we cannot fail to note the vast importance he attached to the exercise of this grace, and how it ought to interpenetrate every Christian duty. We are ever more ready to grumble than to give thanks. Such is the deceitfulness of sin, or the vanity and purblindness of the human heart, that the very regularity and abundance of the divine mercies, instead of increasing, are apt to restrict our gratitude. We take, as a matter of course, what ought to be received with humblest thankfulness. An old writer has well said, Need will make us beggars, but grace only thanksgivers. Gratitude opens the hand of God to give, and the heart of the suppliant to receive aright. Thankfulness for past mercies is an important condition of success in pleading for additional blessings.

IV. **That prayer is efficacious in promoting an efficient declaration of the gospel.**—1. *Prayer should be offered on behalf of Christian ministers.* "Withal praying also for us" (ver. 3). The Colossians were exhorted to pray, not only for Paul, his fellow-labourer Timothy, and their own evangelist Epaphras, but for all teachers of the gospel. The preacher is engaged in a work of vast magnitude, environed with colossal difficulties, and is himself ferociously assailed by great and peculiar perils. The earnest intercessions of a devout and holy people are to him a safeguard and a tower of strength. A once popular minister gradually lost his influence and congregation. The blame was laid entirely upon him. Some of his Church officials went to talk with him on the subject. He replied: "I am quite sensible to all you say, for I feel it to be true; and the reason of it is, I have lost my prayer-book." He explained: "Once my preaching was acceptable, many were edified by it, and numbers were added to the Church, which was then in a prosperous state. But we were then a praying people. Prayer was restrained, and the present condition of things followed. Let us return to the same means, and the same results may be expected." They acted upon this suggestion, and in a short time the minister was as popular as he had ever been, and the Church was again in a flourishing state. The great apostle felt the necessity of co-operative sympathy and prayer (Rom. xv. 30; 2 Thess. iii. 1).

2. *Prayer should be offered that the most prominent features of the gospel may be declared.*—"To speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds" (ver. 3). It has before been explained in this epistle that *the mystery of Christ* is a grand summary of all the leading truths of the gospel: the mystery of the incarnation of Christ, the mystery of His sufferings and death as a sacrifice for sin, the mystery of admitting the Gentiles on equal terms with the Jews to all the privileges and blessings of the new covenant. It was the apostle's intrepid advocacy of the rights of the despised Gentile—maugre the fierce bigotry of his own countrymen, the deep-seated prejudice of the times, and even the slavish indifference of the Gentiles themselves—which led to his imprisonment: "for which I am also in bonds." The prayers of the good give the preacher courage to declare all the counsel of God, whether it be palatable or not, and to give special prominence to those truths which are of priceless importance to humanity.

3. *Prayer should be offered, that opportunity may be afforded for the free declara-*

tion of the gospel.—"That God would open unto us a door of utterance" (ver. 3). The door had been closed and barred to the apostle for four years by his imprisonment. He felt a holy impatience to be free, that he might resume the loved labour of former years, when "from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum he had fully preached the gospel of Christ." But he waited till the door was opened by divine providence; and this he knew was often done in answer to believing prayer. So there are times, in all ages of the Church, when the door of opportunity for disseminating the gospel is shut by the opposition of the world, by the plottings of Satan, by the prevalence of a rabid infidelity, or by the removal of eminent champions for the truth; but, in response to the earnest intercessions of God's people, a great and effectual door is opened, and the Church advances to fresh conquests.

4. *Prayer should be offered that the gospel may be declared with fearless self-evidencing power.*—"That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak" (ver. 4). There are some who preach the gospel in a cold, lifeless, perfunctory manner, or with unmeaning feebleness and unmanly timidity. When the preacher sinks down into a condition so abject as this, he has lost sight of the true meaning of the gospel, he becomes the most pitiable object under the sun, and is exposed to the scathing vengeance of heaven. To preach the gospel with clearness, with intrepidity, and with irresistible persuasiveness, that he "may make it manifest, as he ought to speak," demands the best energies of the soul, and, above all, the special endowments of the Holy Ghost. A minister is mightily aided in preaching by the wrestling intercessions of a holy and sympathetic people.

Lessons.—1. *Prayer is an excellent training for efficiency in all other duties.* 2. *Prayer is a gigantic power in the propagation of the gospel.* 3. *The topics for prayer are vast in range and not far to seek.* 4. *When you can do nothing else you can pray.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 2. *True Devotion.*

I. **Explain the meaning of the text.**—It is:—

1. *Not to be engaged without intermission in outward and formal acts of devotion.*—This is inconsistent with our nature, with commanded duties, with the ends of prayer.

2. *To be frequently engaged in formal acts of devotion.*—(1) No exercise more hallowing and soothing to the soul. (2) None more profitable as procuring blessings. (3) One to which those whose example is recorded gave a prominent place—Job, David, Daniel, Paul, Christ. (4) Morning, evening, intervals, social.

3. *To be persevering and importunate in asking particular blessings.*—God does not always send sensibly the answer at once. A deeper sense of want may be necessary. A trial of faith, patience, and submissiveness may be expedient. The proper season may not have come. God's sovereignty must be owned. We ought to assure ourselves that we pray according to God's will.

II. **Enforce the exhortation.**—1. *Because you are commanded to do so.* 2. *Because Christ and the Spirit intercede for you.* There is no duty for which there is more ample assistance provided. 3. *Because of the number and greatness of your wants.* It is by faith that we know our wants. Hence the necessity. 4. *Because of the exhaustless provision that God has made for you.* God acts as God in the provision and in the bestowal. 5. *Because of the number of promises not yet fulfilled.* To you individually, to the Church, to Christ. 6. *Because the season for prayer is speedily hastening away.*—*Stewart.*

Vers. 3, 4. *Praying and Preaching.*

I. **The sermon is powerful that is well prayed over** (ver. 4).

II. **A praying preacher uses every available opportunity to proclaim the truth** (ver. 3).

III. **The theme of the preacher becomes more definite and effective by prayer** (ver. 3).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 5, 6.

The Wise Conduct of Life.

The Christian lives a dual life: one in spiritual communion with heaven, under the eye of God; the other in daily contact with the outer world, exposed to its observation and criticism. The aspects of the life patent to the world's gaze do not always correspond with the best impulses of the life concealed; the actual falls short of the ideal. The world forms its judgment of the Christian from what it sees of his outer life, and makes no allowance for his unseen struggles after moral perfection and his bitter penitence over conscious failures. Nor can we blame the world for this; the outer life of the believer furnishes the only evidence on which the world can form its estimate, and it is incapable of apprehending and taking into account hidden spiritual causes. The living example of the believer presents the only ideas of Christianity that great numbers have any means of possessing; he is a Christ to them, until they are brought to a clearer knowledge of *the* true and only Christ. With what wisdom and circumspection should the believer walk toward them that are without!

I. **That the conduct of life is to be regulated according to the dictates of the highest wisdom.**—1. *Religion is a life.* "Walk." A walk implies motion, progression, continual approximation to destination. Our life is a walk; we are perpetually and actively advancing towards our destiny. Religion is not a sentiment, not a round of bewitching ceremonies, not a succession of pleasurable emotions; it is a life. It pervades the whole soul, thrills every nerve, participates in every joy and sorrow, and moulds and inspires the individual character.

2. *Religion is a life shaped and controlled by the highest wisdom.*—"Walk in wisdom" (ver. 5). Christian conduct is governed by the spirit of that wisdom which is from above, and under the influence of the knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation (Jas. iii. 17). It is ruled, not by an erratic sentiment or by the wild impulse of a senseless fanaticism, but by a sound understanding and a wise discretion. Its experience and hopes rest upon a basis of truth transcending in certainty, wisdom, and majesty the most imposing speculations of the human mind.

3. *Religion is a life that should be instructive to the irreligious.*—"Toward them that are without" (ver. 5)—without the pale of the Church, the unbelievers. An upright, holy, consistent example is often more eloquent than words, more practically effective than the most elaborate code of moral maxims. The follies and glaring inconsistencies of professing Christians have often inflicted serious damage upon the Church itself, and turned religion into ridicule among the thoughtless and irreligious outsiders. The world is to be largely trained into correct views of truth and a just appreciation of the Christian spirit by the humble, saintly lives of those who have experienced the transforming power of the gospel. Be more anxious to live religiously than to talk religiously.

4. *Religion is a life that impels the soul to seize every opportunity for good doing.*—"Redeeming the time" (ver. 5)—buying up the opportunity for yourselves. Opportunity is the flower of time, which blooms but for a moment and is gone for ever. Evil is prevalent; it affects the great majority, it advances with ever accelerating momentum; every opportunity for checking its career and destroying its

power should be snatched with eagerness, and used with promptitude and discretion. The wisdom that regulates the religious life will be the safest guide as to the way in which the passing moment may be turned to the best advantage. The children of Issachar were commended as men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do (1 Chron. xii. 32). Ill-timed and inconsiderate zeal will do more harm than good.

II. **That the conduct of life is to be regulated by judicious speech.**—1. *Christian speech should be gracious.* "Let your speech be alway with grace" (ver. 6). The mouth ought to be a treasury of benediction, out of which no corrupt communication should issue, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. Truth is the soul of grace; and infinite pains should be taken that every utterance of the tongue should at least be true. Idle gossip, slander, falsehood, should never fall from lips circumcised by the grace of God. Beware of the promiscuous use of the hackneyed phrases of pious cant. It is not so much a set religious phraseology that is wanted, as that all our speech should be baptised with the chrism of a religious spirit.

2. *Christian speech should be piquant.*—"Seasoned with salt" (ver. 6). Salt is the emblem of what is quickening and preservative; and the conversation seasoned with it will be pure, agreeable, pointed—free from all taint and corrupting influence. The ancient teachers of rhetoric used to speak of "Attic salt," with which they advised their pupils to flavour their speeches, that they might sparkle with jests and witticisms. But it is not this kind of condiment the apostle recommends. Wit is a dangerous gift to most men; but where it is joined with a well-balanced understanding, and sanctified by the grace of God, it may become a powerful weapon in the advocacy of truth and minister to the good of many. Speech, to be beneficial, must be thoughtful, choice, sharp, clear, forceful.

3. *Christian speech should be practical.*—"That ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (ver. 6). It requires much practical wisdom to be able to speak well and wisely about religion to both objectors and inquirers, and only the man accustomed to carefully weigh his words and guard his utterances can become an adept in this work. Every Christian may cultivate the wisdom which governs the tongue, and is bound to do so (1 Pet. iii. 15). Silence is sometimes the most conclusive answer. It is the triumph of wisdom to know when to speak and when to hold our peace.

Learn.—1. *The power of a blameless life.* 2. *The value of a well-chosen word.* 3. *The supreme control claimed by religion over actions and speech.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 5. *The Worth of Time.*

I. **Time ought to be improved because its value is inexpressible.**—1. *The worth of time may be argued from a survey of the great and momentous business to which it must be appropriated*—to get ready for eternity. 2. *From the astonishing price at which it has been purchased for us.* 3. *From the careful manner in which it is allotted to mankind.*

II. **Because of the brevity of its duration.**

III. **Because, short as our time is, much of it has already elapsed.**

IV. **Because what remains to us is uncertain.**

V. **Because nothing can ever compensate the loss of time.**

VI. **God has made eternity to depend on the issues and results of time.**—*Dr. Robt. Newton.*

Ver. 6. *Christian Conversation.*—The apostle recommends a seasoning

I. **Of piety.**
II. **Of chastity.**
III. **Of charity.**
IV. **Of severity.**
V. **Of solidity.**

Lessons.—1. *Extravagant raillery poisons conversation.* 2. *A spirit of disputing is a vice of conversation.* 3. *Indiscreet questions are a pest of conversation.*—*Saurin.*

Christ's Truth in Relation to our Daily Conversation.

I. **The large space which words occupy in human life.**—1. *On account of their number.* 2. *On account of their consequences.*

II. **The importance of special self-examination in reference to our words.**

III. **Earnest listening to the divine voices the cure for vain speech and the source of gracious speech.**

IV. **Our words are not to be all about religion, but pervaded by the spirit of religion.**

V. **Our conversation being thus seasoned, we shall know how we ought to answer every man.**—*R. Abercrombie.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7—11.

Side-lights on Church-life in the Early Times.

A straw will indicate the direction of a current; a bit of glass will reveal a star; a kick of the foot may discover a treasure that will enrich successive generations; a word, a look, an involuntary movement will disclose the leading tendency of an individual character; so on the crowded stage of life it is not always the gigantic and public scenes that are most suggestive and instructive, but rather the trivial, undesigned incidents which are unnoticed by an ordinary observer. A reflective mind will pick up material for thought from the most unexpected and unpromising quarters. The apostle has finished the grand argument of the epistle, and shown the importance of certain duties which grow out of the reception of the truths enforced. In approaching the conclusion, he appears to be chiefly occupied with a mass of personal and miscellaneous matters. The few remaining verses contain little else but a series of names, with the briefest qualifying phrases attached. But here and there light is thrown on truths which, though familiar, are all the more strongly impressed on our minds because of their evident antiquity. In these verses there are *side-lights thrown on Church-life in the early times with reference to Christian sympathy, commendations, courtesy, and co-operation.* We learn:—

I. **The value of Christian sympathy.**—1. *As fostering mutual interest in tidings concerning the work of God.* "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, . . . whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose; . . . shall make known unto you all things which are done here" (vers. 7-9). The apostle, though in prison and separated by a long distance from the Colossians, does not abate anything of his interest in their welfare. He had received tidings of their condition as a Church; of their steadfastness, successes, and perils; and he was sure that intelligence from him would be eagerly welcomed by them. He therefore despatched Tychicus and Onesimus, who could furnish more details concerning the apostle, the exemplary spirit in which he bore his sufferings, his profound anxiety on behalf of the Churches and the progress of the gospel in Rome, than were contained in the epistle they carried. A heart, touched with a genuine Christian sympathy, rejoices in the extension of the work of God, in whatever part of the world, and by whatever Christian agency. The mutual interchange of intelligence tends to excite the interest, promote the union, and stimulate the enterprise of the Churches.

2. *As a source of encouragement and strength in the Christian life.*—"That he might know your estate and comfort your heart" (ver. 8). Instead of "that he might know your estate," another reading of the original, adopted by Lightfoot and other eminent critics, has "that ye might know our affairs." "But," as Bishop Wordsworth remarks, "the very purpose for which Paul sent Tychicus to the

Colossians was not, it would seem, in order that they might know how St. Paul was faring, but that he might know whether they were standing steadfast in the faith against the attempts of the false teachers." Whichever reading is adopted, the practical lesson is the same; both express the reality, strength, and beauty of a mutual sympathy. The presence of Tychicus and Onesimus, the character of the tidings they brought, and the fervour of their exhortations, would encourage and reassure the Colossians amid the perplexities and doubts occasioned by the false teachers. Mutual expression of sympathy and intercommunity of intelligence will do much to comfort and edify the Churches.

II. **The appropriateness of Christian commendation** (ver. 7).—The apostle speaks highly of his two messengers—not in terms of extravagant flattery, but in a way calculated to ensure their favourable reception by the Colossians and a respectful attention to their message. Tychicus was a native of proconsular Asia, perhaps of Ephesus. He was well known as an authorised delegate of St. Paul, and is mentioned in other places as being with the apostle (Acts xx. 42; 2 Tim. iv. 12; Tit. iii. 12). He is spoken of in this verse as "a beloved brother, a faithful minister, a fellow-servant in the Lord." The great apostle, far from taking advantage of his exalted calling and inspiration, humbled himself before the least of his brethren, spoke in the highest terms of their faithful labours, and associated them with his own. Onesimus, a Colossian, is commended as "a faithful and beloved brother." It was the more needful he should be thus commended, because if he was known to the Colossians at all it would be as a worthless, runaway slave. Some time before, Onesimus had forsaken his master Philemon, and fled to Rome—the common sink of all nations—probably as a convenient hiding-place where he might escape detection among its crowds, and make a livelihood as best he could. In the metropolis—perhaps accidentally, perhaps through the intervention of Epaphras—he fell in with the apostle, his master's old friend. St. Paul becomes interested in his case, instructs him in the gospel, and is the instrument of his conversion; and now he is commended to the Colossians, no more as a good-for-nothing slave, but as a brother; no more dishonest and faithless, but trustworthy; no more an object of contempt, but love. The apostle sent him back to his master Philemon, and it is generally thought, having been set at liberty by his owner, he became a faithful and laborious minister of Christ. Such is the transforming power of divine grace in changing and renewing the heart, in obliterating all former distinctions and degradations, and in elevating a poor slave to the dignity of "a faithful and beloved brother" of the greatest of apostles. Christian commendations are valuable according to the character of the persons from whom they issue, and as they are borne out in the subsequent conduct of the persons commended. Every care should be taken that the testimonial of recommendation is strictly true. It is putting a man in a false position and doing him an injury to exaggerate his qualifications by excessive eulogy.

III. **Suggestive examples of Christian courtesy.**—"Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) and Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision" (vers. 10, 11). Aristarchus was a Jew, though a native of Thessalonica. He was with Paul during the riot at Ephesus, and was hurried with Gaius into the theatre by Demetrius and his craftsmen. He accompanied the apostle from Greece to Jerusalem with the collection for the saints. When Paul was imprisoned in Judea, he abode with him; and when he went into Italy, he also went and remained with him there during his confinement, till at length he became, it may be, obnoxious to the magistrates, and was cast into prison; or perhaps he became a voluntary prisoner, that he might share the apostle's captivity. What a glimpse have we

here of heroic devotion, and of the irresistible charm there must have been in the apostle in attaching men to himself! Marcus was the John Mark frequently referred to in the Acts of the Apostles. He had been the occasion of a contention between Paul and Barnabas, which led to their separating from each other and following different scenes of labour. Mark had, from cowardice or some other motive, "departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them out to the work"; and when Barnabas, probably influenced by his affection as near kinsman, wished to take him with them, Paul resolutely refused thus to distinguish a young and unstable disciple. But from the reference here it appears that Mark had repented of his timid and selfish behaviour and returned to a better spirit. Perhaps the displeasure of the apostle weighed upon his mind, and, with Barnabas' prayers and example, had brought him to a right view of his misconduct. He was now restored to the apostle's confidence, and it appears Paul had already given directions to the Colossians concerning Mark to welcome him heartily if he paid them a visit—"touching whom ye received commandments: if he come to you, receive him." The third Hebrew convert who united in sending salutations was Jesus, which was also called Justus—a common name or surname of Jews and proselytes, denoting obedience and devotion to the law. Nothing definite is known of this person; but the apostle held him in such esteem as to join his salutation with the rest. These three friends and companions of Paul were Jews—they were *of the circumcision*; and yet they send their salutations to a Church composed chiefly of Gentiles. The Christian spirit triumphed over their deep-rooted prejudices, and their greeting would be all the more valued as an expression of their personal esteem, their brotherly affection, and their oneness in Christ. That courtesy is the most refined, graceful, gentle, and acceptable that springs from the Christian spirit.

IV. **The solace of Christian co-operation.**—"These only are my fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me" (ver. 11). The tendency of the Jewish convert was to lean to the Mosaic ritual, and insist on its necessity in realising the efficacy of the gospel. They thus favoured the false philosophy of the Jewish Platonists, and fell into the errors against which the apostle so faithfully warns in this epistle. The action of the Judaizing teachers and their sympathisers was often a grief and hindrance to him. Of all the Jewish converts in Rome only three were a comfort to him. They thoroughly embraced and advocated the free and unconditional admission of the Gentiles into the Church of Christ, and were devoted and zealous fellow-workers with him in extending the kingdom of God. It is an evidence of the unpopularity among the Jews of the gospel as intended equally for the Gentiles, and of the formidable prejudices and difficulties with which the apostle had to contend in that early time, that there were only three Hebrew converts who were a comfort to him. And yet how consoling is the sympathy and co-operation of the faithful few! Sometimes the noblest men are deserted by timid and time-serving professors, and left to toil on alone in peril and sadness. History records the triumphs of those who have successfully braved the solitary struggle in some great crisis; but it is silent about the vanquished who, with broken hearts and shattered intellects, have sunk into unchronicled oblivion.

Lessons.—1. *Christian experience is the same in all ages.* 2. *True courtesy costs little and accomplishes much.* 3. *Genuine sympathy is best shown by an active and self-denying co-operation.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 12, 13.

The Model Pastor.

Nothing is known of Epaphras beyond the few but significant notices which connect him with Colossæ, of which city he was a native. Acting under the direction of St. Paul, probably when the apostle was residing for three years at Ephesus, Epaphras was the honoured agent in introducing the gospel into Colossæ and the neighbouring cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis; and it is evident he regarded himself as responsible for the spiritual well-being of all these places. The dangerous condition of the Colossian and neighbouring Churches at this time filled the mind of Epaphras with a holy jealousy and alarm. A strange form of heresy had appeared among them—a mixture of Jewish formalism with the speculations of an Oriental philosophy—and was rapidly spreading. The distress of the faithful evangelist was extreme. He journeyed to Rome in order to lay this state of things before the apostle, and to seek his counsel and assistance. The apostle bears testimony to his profound anxiety for the spiritual condition of the newly founded Churches on the banks of the Lycus. He had much toil for them, and was ever fervently wrestling in prayer on their behalf, that they might stand fast and not lose the simplicity of their earlier faith, but might advance to a more perfect knowledge of the divine will. In the verses now under consideration we have Epaphras brought before us as *the model pastor.*

I. **The model pastor is distinguished by a suggestive designation.**—"A servant of Christ" (ver. 12). This title, which the apostle uses several times for himself, is not elsewhere conferred on any other individual, except once on Timothy (Phil. i. 1), and probably points to exceptional services in the cause of the gospel on the part of Epaphras (*Lightfoot*). A true pastor is not the servant of the Church to echo its decisions and do its bidding; but he is the servant *for* the Church to influence its deliberations and decisions, to mould its character and direct its enterprises. He is *a servant of Christ*, receiving his commission from Him, ever anxious to ascertain His will, and ready to carry out that will at whatever sacrifice. Such a service involves no loss of self-respect or manliness, no degradation, but is free, honourable, and rich in blessing.

II. **The model pastor is incessant in zealous labour.**—"For I bear him record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea and them in Hierapolis" (ver. 13). The zeal of Epaphras urged him to extend his Christian labours beyond the limits of Colossæ: he visited the adjoining cities, which were much larger in population and wealthier in commerce. Laodicea, rising from obscurity, had become, two or three generations before the apostle wrote, a populous and thriving city, and was then the metropolis of the cities on the banks of the Lycus. Hierapolis was an important and growing city, and, in addition to its trade in dyed wools, had a reputation as a fashionable watering-place, where the seekers of pleasure and of health resorted to partake of its waters which possessed valuable medicinal qualities. The rare virtues of the city have been celebrated in song:

> "Hail, fairest soil in all broad Asia's realm;
> Hail, golden city, nymph divine, bedeck'd
> With flowing rills, thy jewels."

Into the midst of these populations the fervent Epaphras introduced the gospel, and spared no pains in his endeavour to establish and confirm the believers. It was on their behalf he undertook the journey to Rome to confer with St. Paul as to their state; and the apostle testifies to the unceasing exercise of his great and holy zeal for his distant but ever-remembered flock. When the heart is

interested and moved, labour is a delight; and it is the way in which the heart is affected towards any work that gives to it significance and worth. Canon Liddon writes: "Are we not very imperfectly alive to the moral meaning of work and the moral fruits of work as work?" The true pastor, with a heart overflowing with zeal for the glory of God and the good of men, cheerfully undertakes labour from which the ordinary worker would timidly shrink.

III. **The model pastor is intensely exercised in prayer for the people of God.**—"Always labouring fervently [wrestling, agonising] for you in prayers" (ver. 12). The faithful minister has not only to teach his flock—a task which involves vigilant observation, extensive reading, and anxious study—but he has also to plead earnestly at the throne of grace on their behalf. In times of spiritual dearth, disappointment, embarrassment, and distress, prayer is the all-efficacious resource. There are circumstances in which the minister can do nothing but pray. Difficulties that defied all other means have vanished before the irresistible power of persistent and believing intercession. Prayer attains what the most conclusive reasoning, the most eloquent appeal, the most diligent personal attention, sometimes fail to accomplish. It sets in silent but stupendous operation the mightiest spiritual agencies of the universe. It opens the fountain of divine grace, and its streams flow in full-tide velocity through the hitherto arid wilderness of human hearts, and life, freshness, fertility, and beauty spring up in its reviving course. It is God only whose help is omnipotent, and on this help faithful prayer lays hold and uses it in effecting its wondrous transformations.

IV. **The model pastor is constantly solicitous that the people of God should be firmly established in the highest good.**—"That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (ver. 12)—perfectly instructed and fully convinced in everything willed *by God*. The great aim of all ministerial anxiety is not only to instruct his people in the full and accurate knowledge of the divine will, but to produce such a persuasion of the supreme majesty and authority of that will as to induce steadfast continuance in practical obedience. The will of God and the highest good of man are always in harmony. Whatever threatens to disturb the stability of the believer, or to retard his development towards the highest moral excellence, whether it arises from his personal unwatchfulness and indifference or from the subtle attacks of error, is always a subject of keen solicitude to the faithful pastor. He knows that if his converts fall away they are lost and the truth itself is disgraced. To be established in an unswerving obedience it is necessary to be *filled* with the knowledge of God's will. This blessedness is the grand scope and crowning glory of the Christian life.

Lessons.—1. *The office of pastor is fraught with endless anxieties, great responsibilities, and rare opportunities.* 2. *The true pastor finds his purest inspirations, his most potent spiritual weapon, and his grandest successes in prayer.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 14—17.

Christian Greetings and Counsels.

It is sometimes asked, with an indiscriminate flippancy, "What's in a name?" There are some names which have no title to a lasting remembrance, and with reference to these the flippancy may be justified. But there are names whose reputation is imperishable, and which are written on the world's history in indelible characters. The name of Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, will be venerated by the coming ages when the titles of the greatest sages and warriors shall have faded away in the darkness of oblivion; and, just as there are lesser lights in the firmament that share in the glory of the great luminary to which they are essentially related, so there are names of lesser note

grouped around that of the great apostle that are immortalised by their association with him. Besides, names as they are quoted and used by St. Paul in this and other epistles often furnish evidence of the authenticity of Scripture and undesigned coincidences of the truth of the sacred history. In these verses there are some names preserved to us which were lifted into prominence by the connection of the persons they represented with the apostle, and by their own eminent piety and usefulness. They furnish another illustration of the truth of the sacred saying, "The memory of the just is blessed; but the name of the wicked shall rot." We have here a series of kindly Christian greetings and important Christian counsels. Observe:—

I. **The value of a Christian greeting is estimated by the moral character of those from whom it emanates.**—"Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you" (ver. 14). Two persons are here mentioned whose individual histories present a suggestive contrast; and it is observable, by the way in which their names are mentioned, that the two men stood very differently in the apostle's estimation.

1. *Luke is the beloved physician*—the very dear and attached friend of Paul. He was his constant companion in travel, and stood faithfully by him in his greatest trials. He joined the apostle at Troas (Acts xvi. 10), accompanied him into Judea, remained with him during two years of his imprisonment at Jerusalem and Cæsarea, and was no doubt present at his trial before Festus and Felix; he went with him into Italy when Paul was sent there as a prisoner, and during his second and final imprisonment in Rome; while others deserted him, Luke continued his staunch and faithful friend. In the last epistle probably the apostle ever wrote is the simple but pathetic reference, "Only Luke is with me." We can understand, therefore, the affectionate tenderness with which Luke is designated the beloved physician. As St. Paul was not a robust man, but was troubled with a "thorn in the flesh," the presence of a medical friend must have been of immense service to him in his laborious missionary journeys and during his long imprisonment. The physicians of ancient times had a very questionable reputation for religiousness; but in these modern days there is an increasing number of medical men who are no less eminent for piety than for their professional skill, and many and important are the opportunities of such for doing good both to body and soul. The greetings of a man of superlative moral excellence is gratefully welcomed and respectfully treasured.

2. *And Demas!*—How suggestive is the laconic allusion! There is no explanation, no qualifying word of any special regard. Perhaps the apostle was already beginning to suspect him, to mark the increasing worldliness of his spirit, and his growing indifference to divine things. About three years after this greeting was despatched to the Colossians, we meet with the melancholy record: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. iv. 10). Alas! how seductive and how fatal are the allurements of the world! The highest and holiest are not invulnerable to its charms. The most promising career of usefulness and honour has often been blighted by its influence. Bitter indeed would be the disappointment of the apostle's heart to witness one, whom he had acknowledged and trusted as a fellow-worker in the gospel, fall a victim to worldly avarice, and, like Achan, covet the golden wedge and Babylonish garment of secular things. There is a specially solemn significance in the warning of the beloved disciple: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John ii. 15).

II. **Christian greeting recognises the universal brotherhood of the Church.**—1. *We learn the early Christian Churches were composed of brethren.* "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea" (ver. 15). This recognition of a common brotherhood was a great advance upon the eclecticism and sharp, prejudiced distinctions of the times. In the circle of the Christian Church the Jew

surrendered his Judaism, and the Gentile his paganism, and became one in Christ; the slave and the freeman enjoyed the same spiritual liberty, and the barbarian was no longer dreaded as a monster, but hailed as a brother. The test of brotherhood and union is an individual faith in a common Saviour, the sharing of one common life in the Holy Spirit, and the assurance of possessing one common Father in God. It is only as we encourage the brotherly spirit that we can ensure union and permanency in the Churches. About thirty years after this salutation was sent to the Laodiceans, the Church in that city had degenerated into a state of lukewarmness and sterility (Rev. iii. 15, 16). There is need for united watchfulness and fidelity in order to continue "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

2. *We learn further that a separate assembly of the brethren constituted a Church.*—"And Nymphas, and the Church which is in his house" (ver. 15). This was not the principal Church in Laodicea, nor was it simply a meeting together of the family, but an assembly of worshippers. Nymphas was probably a man of position and influence in the city, and being also a man of piety he afforded every opportunity for the gathering together of the brethren for Christian worship and communion. There is little said in the New Testament about Church polity, and there is no ecclesiastical organisation, whether Episcopal, Presbyterian, or Congregational, that can claim exclusive divine authority and sanction. Whether meeting in large numbers in the stately cathedral, the modern tabernacle, or a few in the private dwelling-house, a company of believers assembled for worship and mutual edification constitutes a Church. Thus the true brotherhood of Christianity is maintained, irrespective of locality, of ecclesiastical structures, or of sacerdotal claims and pretensions.

III. **The reading of the Holy Scriptures in the Church an important subject of apostolic counsel.**—"And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans, and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea" (ver. 16). The epistle from Laodicea refers to a letter that St. Paul had sent to that city, and which was to be forwarded to Colossæ for perusal. Some think this was a letter specifically addressed to the Laodiceans, and which is now lost; but the best commentators now believe that the epistle to the Ephesians is meant, which was, in fact, a circular letter addressed to the principal Churches in proconsular Asia. Tychicus was obliged to pass through Laodicea on his way to Colossæ, and would leave a copy of the Ephesian epistle there before the Colossian letter was delivered. Here we learn that one important means of edification was the reading of the inspired letters of the apostle in the assemblies of the brethren. The public reading of the Scriptures has been an invaluable method of instruction to the Church in all ages and places, and it is a provision with which the Church will never be able to dispense. The Church which dares to prohibit the general perusal of the Scriptures, or reads only small portions, and those mumbled in a language not understood by the people, has thrown off all regard for apostolic counsel and inflicts an unutterable injury upon humanity. Shut up the Bible, and the Churches will instantly be invaded by the most enfeebling superstitions, the civilisation of the nations will be put centuries behind, and the widespread ignorance and moral and social degradation of the dark ages will reappear.

IV. **An example of apostolic counsel concerning fidelity in the Christian ministry.**—"And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it" (ver. 17). It is probable that Archippus was a youthful pastor recently appointed to the Church at Laodicea. Already signs of slackened zeal began to appear, which afterwards culminated in the state of lukewarmness for which this Church was denounced (Rev. iii. 19). The condition of preacher and people reacts upon each other; the Church takes its

colour from and communicates its colour to its spiritual pastor. Hence the apostle, well knowing the perils surrounding the inexperienced Archippus, sends to him this timely warning to take heed to his ministry. He is reminded of :—

1. *The direct authority of the ministry.*—"The ministry which thou hast received in the Lord." The commission to preach the gospel can come from no other than the Lord, and can be properly received only by one who is himself spiritually in the Lord; there must be not only *gifts*, but also *grace*. The minister must be in direct and constant communication with the Lord, depend on Him for help in doing his duty, remember he is accountable to Him, and strive to seek His glory in preference to all personal considerations. In times of difficulty and trial it will sustain the courage of the minister to feel that his commission is divine in its source and authority.

2. *The implied dangers of the ministry.*—"Take heed." The special dangers that threatened the Colossian Church at that time have been distinctly pointed out in the epistle. The ministry is ever encompassed with perils, arising from the seductive forms of error, the flatteries and frowns of the world, the subtle workings of self-approbation, and the deceitfulness of sin. There is need for the exercise of a sleepless vigilance, a tireless zeal, and a faultless circumspection.

3. *The imperative personal demands of the ministry.*—"That thou fulfil it." The whole truth must be made known, and that with the utmost clearness, faithfulness, kindness, and completeness. Every energy must be consecrated to the sacred work, and the aid of all the powers of heaven earnestly implored. No pains must be spared in prayer, study, and self-sacrifice to reach the highest efficiency and make "full proof" of the ministry. Failure here is lamentable and irremediable.

Lessons.—1. *Salutations are valuable when imbued with the Christian spirit.* 2. *The true appreciation of the Holy Scriptures is shown in their constant and studious perusal.* 3. *The Christian ministry should be sustained by practical sympathy and intelligent co-operation.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 14. "Luke, the beloved physician." *Religion and the Medical Profession.*

I. **The deference shown to medical science.**

II. **Benevolence of the medical profession.**

III. **Religious drawbacks in assaults from materialism.**—Mind is one thing, matter is another.

IV. **Religious responsibilities.** — Vast power for good. Co-operation with the minister.

V. **The great Physician.**—Doctor and patient need Him alike.—*Homiletic Monthly.*

Ver. 16. *The Public Reading of the Holy Scriptures an Important Means of Church Edification.*

I. **It is in harmony with the usage of the ancient Church.**

II. **It is enforced by precept and example in the Scriptures themselves.**

III. **It familiarises the mind with the grandest truths.**

IV. **It is a mighty agency in advocating and moulding national character.**

V. **It keeps alive the enthusiasm of the Church for aggressive enterprise.**

VI. **It demands the most laborious study and practice to render it effective.**

Ver. 17. *The Christian Ministry a Solemn and Responsible Trust.*

I. **It is divine in its bestowal.**—"Received in the Lord."

II. **It is personal in its responsibility.**—"Which thou hast received."

III. **It involves the communication of good to others.**—"Ministry."

IV. **It has a special aspect of importance to the individual minister.**—"The ministry."

"That thou fulfil it." *The Christian Ministry demands Unswerving Fidelity in accomplishing its Lofty Mission.*

I. **Divine truth must be clearly apprehended and profoundly realised.**

II. **The whole truth must be declared.**

III. **The declaration of the truth must be full and courageous.**

"Take heed." *The Christian Ministry is surrounded by Peculiar Perils.*—A shrewd and ever-wakeful vigilance is needed—

I. **Against the stealthy encroachments of error.**

II. **Against the pernicious influences of the world.**

III. **Against the subtle temptations to unfaithfulness.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 18.

Words of Farewell.

Last words have in them a nameless touch of pathos. They linger in the memory as a loved familiar presence, they soothe life's sorrows, and exert upon the soul a strange and irresistible fascination. As the years rush by, how rich in meaning do the words that have fallen from dying lips become, as when Cæsar said sadly, "And thou, Brutus!"; or when John Quincy Adams said, "This is the last of earth"; or Mirabeau's frantic cry for music, after a life of discord; or George Washington's calm statement, "It is well"; or Wesley's triumphant utterance, "The best of all is, God is with us." And these closing words of the high-souled apostle written from his Roman prison, in prospect of threatened death, carry with them a significance and tenderness which will be felt wherever this epistle is read. In these words we have *a personally inscribed salutation, a touching reminder, and a brief benediction.*

I. **A personally inscribed salutation.**—"The salutation by the hand of mo Paul." The rest of the epistle was dictated by the apostle to an amanuensis, who, in this case, was probably Timothy. Paul adds his own personal salutation, not only as an expression of his anxious love, but also as a mark of the authenticity of the document, and of his unqualified approval of its contents. It would surely be a scene worthy of the pencil of genius to portray the noble prisoner, whose right hand was linked to the left of his military gaoler, tracing with tremulous fingers the final words to those for whose sake he was in bonds! How would the hand-writing of such a man be prized and venerated, and with what holy eagerness would his words be read and pondered!

II. **A touching reminder.**—"Remember my bonds." The apostle was in prison, not for any offence against the laws of God or man, but for the sake of the gospel he loved to preach, and which had wrought so marvellous a change in the lives of those to whom he wrote. His bonds bore irrefragable testimony to the truth he was called to proclaim, and to his unalterable determination to insist upon the rights and privileges of the Gentiles, on whose behalf he suffered. He wished to be remembered in prayer, that he might be sustained in his imprisonment, and that he might be speedily delivered from it, so that he might preach the glorious news of spiritual liberty to the benighted and fettered sons of men. "Remember my bonds." These words seem to indicate that the illustrious prisoner was more concerned to exhibit a spirit and deportment befitting the gospel than to be released from his incarceration. The Church of Christ in all ages has had abundant reason to remember with gratitude and

praise the bonds of the great apostle, not only for the stimulating example of holy patience and dignified submission displayed under trying circumstances, but for the unspeakably precious literary treasures they enabled him to bequeath to the world. Bishop Wordsworth has well said: "The fact that this epistle was written by Paul in this state of durance and restraint, and yet designed to minister comfort to others, and that it has never ceased to cheer the Church of Christ, is certainly one which is worthy of everlasting remembrance." In the prayer for "all prisoners and captives" special reference should be made to those who are now suffering for the truth. The offence of the cross has not yet ceased. We most practically remember the imprisoned when we supply their wants and assuage their sufferings.

III. **A brief benediction.**—"Grace be with you. Amen." The epistle begins and ends with blessing; and between these two extremes lies a magnificent body of truth which has dispensed blessings to thousands and is destined to bless thousands more. The benediction is short, but it is instinct with fervent life and laden with the unutterable wealth of divine beneficence. Grace is inclusive of all the good God can bestow or man receive. Grace is what all need, what none can merit, and what God alone can give. To possess the grace of God is to be rich indeed; without it "'Tis misery all, and woe." Grace kindles the lamp of hope amidst the darkest experiences of life, supplies the clue which unravels the most tangled mysteries, presses the nectar of consolation into the bitterest cup, implants in the soul its holiest motives and opens up its noblest career, strengthens the dying saint when he traverses the lonely borderland of the unknown, and tunes and perpetuates the celestial harmonies of the everlasting song.

Lessons.—1. *Praise God for a well-authenticated Bible.* 2. *Praise God for the teachings of a suffering life.* 3. *Praise God for His boundless grace.*

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

Thessalonica and its Church.—Most of the Churches of the New Testament belonged to cities which, if they have not dropped out of existence altogether, are scarcely recognisable to-day. Thessalonica exists as a place of considerable commercial importance, with a population of 70,000, under the shortened form of "Saloniki." It is situated at the head of the Thermaic Gulf, so called from the ancient name of the town which rises like an amphitheatre above its blue waters. *Therma* is the name by which the town comes into history, the *warm* mineral springs of the neighbourhood originating the appropriate designation. Cassander, son-in-law of Philip of Macedon, gave to the city the name of his wife, "Thessalonica." Its position brought commerce both by sea and land, for, in addition to its natural harbour, the Via Egnatia, like a great artery, drove its stream of traffic through the town. Trade brought riches, and riches luxurious living and licentiousness. But if sin abounded, so did the grace which sent the heralds of deliverance from sin in the persons of St. Paul and Silas, fresh from their terrible beating and the dungeon of Philippi, and Timothy, the ever-valued friend of St. Paul. Jews were in Thessalonica in greater force than in Philippi; and St. Paul, perhaps not with any great hope of success amongst the adherents of the religion in which he had been trained, but according to his constant rule, went first to the synagogue, hoping that, as elsewhere, devout souls not content with the materialism and atheism of their day might be amongst those who were drawn towards the faith of Israel. So at least it proved, and their acceptance of the message of the gospel was the signal for the outbreak of Jewish hatred which set on the *canaille* of the city with a cry of revolution and high treason. Amidst such birth-throes the second Church in Europe came into being. St. Paul's continuance in the city might only have provoked murder, so, leaving the infant Church to one who would "naturally care for" it, he made his way to Berœa.

Occasion and design of the epistle.—With eager impatience the apostle would wait for the messenger with tidings of the Macedonian Churches. The writer of the Proverbs likened "good news from a far country" to "cold waters to a thirsty soul"; so St. Paul says to these Thessalonians: "Now when Timothy came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, . . . we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: for *now we live*, if ye stand fast in the Lord" (1 Thess. iii. 6-8). Timothy had brought word of their fidelity; but he had also to inform the apostle of the persecutions they had to endure, and also of the troubled minds of some of the Christian brotherhood over the condition of their dead, and their relationship to the Lord whom they daily expected.

So St. Paul sends them word by this first letter of his earnest longing to see them again, and of how he had often purposed to do so, but had been thwarted. Perhaps there are references in the epistle to aspersions on the character of Paul; and in other ways the epistle is meant to do what Paul, now that his missionary field had become so extended, could not do in person.

Contents of the Epistle.

i. 1.	Salutation.
2—10.	Thanksgiving for reception and diffusion of the gospel.
ii. 1—12.	Appeal to their knowledge of what Paul's ministry had been.
13—16.	Thanksgiving for fidelity under the strain of Jewish hostility.
17—iii. 13.	Baffled purposes resulting in the despatch of Timothy, and the outburst of joy for the good news with which he returned.
iv. 1—12.	Warning against lustful injustice, and exhortation to a further development of brotherly love.
13—v. 11.	The Second Advent in its relation to those who already slept.
12—24.	Ethics of Church-life and personal life.
25—28.	Conclusion.

CHAPTER I.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Paul, and Sylvanus, and Timotheus.**—As to Paul, it may be noted that he does not mention his office. It was largely owing to the aspersions of others that he came, later, to magnify his office. Silvanus is the "fellow-helper" and fellow-sufferer of the apostle, better known to New Testament readers by the shortened form of his name—Silas. That he was a Jew appears from Acts xv., but, like Paul, able to claim the privilege of Roman citizenship (Acts xvi.). Timotheus is the valuable and dear companion of St. Paul. Twelve or fourteen years later he is said to be still young (1 Tim. iv. 12). He, too, is only partly a Jew (Acts xvi. 3). **Grace be unto you, and peace.**—The men who are by birth and training divided between Jew and Gentile, salute both. It is not less true of the gospel than the law that it speaks the language of the children of men. All that grace could mean to the Greek, or peace to the Hebrew, met in Him whose title was written above the cross in Hebrew and Greek and Latin.

Ver. 3. **Work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope.**—The famous three sister-graces familiar to us from St. Paul's other letters. As Bengel says, they are *Summa Christianismi.* St. James, one thinks, would have liked the expression, "work of faith" (Jas. ii. 14-26). But if faith works, love cannot be outdone (1 Cor. xiii. 13), and toils with strenuous endeavour; whilst hope—a faculty flighty enough with some—here patiently endures, "pressing on and *bearing up.*"

Ver. 4. **Your election.**—God is said to pick out, not for any inherent qualities, certain persons for purposes of His own. The same idea is in the word "saints," as those whom God has separated from a godless world and made them dear to Himself.

Ver. 5. **Our gospel.**—The good news which we proclaimed; so when St. Paul in Rom. ii. 16 calls it "*my* gospel." **In word . . . in power.**—The antithesis is sometimes between the word or declaration and the reality; here perhaps we have an advance on that. Not only was it a word the contents of which were really true, but efficacious too. **In much assurance.**—R.V. margin, "in much fulness." "The *power* is in the gospel preached, the *fulfilment* in the hearers, and the *Holy Spirit* above and within them inspires both" (*Findlay*).

Ver. 6. **Followers of us and of the Lord.**—R.V. "imitators." St. Paul begs his Corinthian readers to imitate him, *even as* he imitates Christ. The same thought is implied here: We are walking after Christ; walk after us, and you will follow Him. **With joy of the Holy Ghost.**—Not only was the word preached "in the Holy Ghost" (ver. 5), but it was eagerly welcomed by hearts made ready by the Holy Ghost—as St. Paul said to the Corinthians, "So we preach, so ye believed."

Ver. 7. **So that ye were ensamples.**—R.V. follows the singular. The original word is that from which we get our "type." The image left on a coin by stamping is a type. Children are said to be types of their parents. So these Thessalonians were clearly stamped as children of God.

Ver. 8. **For from you sounded out the word of the Lord.**—The word did not originate amongst the Thessalonians. They had but taken up the sound and sent it ringing on to others in the regions farther removed. They had echoed out the word, says St. Paul. **In every place.**—Or as we say, "Everybody is talking about the matter."

Ver. 9. **What manner of entering in.**—In Acts xvii. we have an account of how the Jews instigated men ever ready for a brawl to bring a charge of high treason—the most likely way of giving the quietus to the disturbers of ancient traditions, Paul and Silas. **To serve the living and true God.**—The Thessalonians had not been delivered from the bondage of fear that they might lead lives irresponsible. "Get a new master," then "be a new man."

Ver. 10. **And to wait for His Son.**—The compound word for wait is only found here in the New Testament. The idea may be compared with our Lord's figure of the bondservants waiting with lights and ready for service on their Lord's return (Luke xii. 35-40). **Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.**—R.V. "delivereth." The wrath to come "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. i. 18) is the penalty threatened against sin persisted in.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 1.

Phases of Apostolic Greeting.

There is an interest about this epistle as the first in the magnificent series of inspired writings which bear the name of Paul. This was "the beginning of his strength, the excellency of dignity and power." The labours of the apostle and his co-helpers in the enterprising and populous city of Thessalonica, notwithstanding the angriest opposition, were crowned with success. The stern prejudice of the Jew was assailed and conquered, the subtle philosophising of the Grecian tracked and exposed. The truth was eagerly embraced; and as sunbeams streaming through mist render it transparent, so did the light of the gospel bring out in clearness and beauty the character of the Thessalonian citizens, which had been hitherto shrouded in the dark shadows of superstition.

I. **This greeting is harmonious in its outflow.**—Paul, though the only apostle of the three, did not in this instance assume the title or display any superiority either of office or power. Silvanus and Timotheus had been owned of God, equally with himself, in planting the Thessalonian Church, and were held in high esteem among the converts. Each man had his distinctive individuality, varied talents, and special mode of working; but there was an emphatic unity of purpose in bringing about results. They rejoiced together in witnessing the inception, confirmation, and prosperity of the Church, and when absent united in sending a fervent, harmonious greeting. This harmony of feeling is traceable throughout both epistles in the prevalent use of the first person plural. The association of Silvanus and Timotheus with the apostle in this greeting also indicated their perfect accord with him in the divine character of the doctrines he declared. As men dowered with the miraculous faculty of spiritual discernment, they could testify that everything contained in the epistle was dictated by the Spirit of God and worthy of universal evidence. Not that the personal peculiarities of any man give additional value to the doctrine. Truth is vaster than the individual, whatever gifts he possesses or lacks. The water of life is as sweet and refreshing whether sipped from the rudest earthen vessel or from the goblet of richly embossed gold. What a suggestive lesson of confidence and unity was taught the Thessalonians by the harmonious example of their teachers!

II. **This greeting recognises the Church's sublime origin.**—It is addressed "unto the Church which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ."

1. *The Church is divinely founded.*—The preposition "in" denotes the most intimate union with God, and is of similar significance as in the comprehensive prayer of Jesus: "As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one *in* Us." The Church rests, not on any sacerdotal authority or human organisation, though many have laboured thus to narrow its limits and define its character; it depends for its origin, life, and perpetuity on union with the Deity. It is based on the divine love, fostered by the divine Spirit, shielded by Omnipotence, and illumined and adorned by the divine glory. It exists for purely spiritual purposes, is the depositary of the revealed word, the channel of divine communication to man, the sanctuary of salvation.

2. *The Church is divinely sustained.*—Founded in God, it is every moment sustained by Him. Thus the Church survives the mightiest opposition, the fret and wear of perpetual change. It is not wedded to any locality under heaven. Places once famous for the simplicity and power of their Church-life have become notoriously vile or sunk into utter obscurity. Bethel, once bearing the hallowed name House of God, under the idolatrous rule of Jeroboam became corrupted into Bethhaven, House of Iniquity. Jerusalem, the praise of the whole earth, was once the chosen habitation of Jehovah; now it is a heap of ruins, its temple and

worship destroyed, and its people scattered, without king, prophet, or leader. The light that shone so full and clear from the seven celebrated Asiatic Churches grew dim and went out, and that region is now wrapped in the darkness of idolatry. And Thessalonica, renowned as a pattern of Christian purity and zeal, now languishes under its modern name of Saloniki, a victim of Turkish despotism, and professing a spurious religion the first founders of the Church there, could they revisit the spot, would certainly repudiate. But the true Church lives, grows, and triumphs.

III. **This greeting supplicates the bestowal of the highest blessings.**—1. *Grace.* The source of all temporal good—life, health, sustenance, prosperity, enjoyment; and of all spiritual benefits—pardon for the guilty, rest for the troubled spirit, guidance for the doubting and perplexed, strength for the feeble, deliverance for the tempted, purity for the polluted, victory and felicity for the faithful. The generosity of God knows no stint. A certain monarch once threw open his parks and gardens to the public during the summer months. The royal gardener, finding it troublesome, complained to his Majesty that the visitors plucked the flowers. "What," said the kind-hearted king, "are my people fond of flowers? Then plant some more!" So our heavenly King with lavish hand scatters on our daily path the flowers of blessing, and as fast as we can gather them, in spite of the grudging, churlish world, more are supplied.

2. *Peace.*—A blessing inclusive of all the happiness resulting from a participation in the divine favour. *Peace with God*, with whom sin has placed us in antagonism, and to whom we are reconciled in Christ Jesus, who hath "abolished in His flesh the enmity, so making peace." *Peace of conscience*, a personal blessing conferred on him who believes in Jesus. *Peace one with another*—peace in the Church. In the concluding counsels of this epistle the writer impressively insists, "Be at peace among yourselves." The value of this blessing to any Christian community cannot be exaggerated. A single false semitone converts the most exquisite music into discord.

3. *The source of all the blessings desired.*—"From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." The Jew in his most generous greeting could only say, "God be gracious unto you, and remember His covenant"; but the Christian "honours the Son even as he honours the Father." The Father's love and the Son's work are the sole source and cause of every Christian blessing.

Lessons.—1. *Learn the freeness and fulness of the gospel.* It contains and offers all the blessings that can enrich and ennoble man. It needs but the willing heart to make them his own. He may gather wisdom from the Eastern proverb, and in a higher sense than first intended, "Hold all the skirts of thy mantle extended when heaven is raining gold."

2. *Learn the spirit we should cultivate towards others.*—A spirit of genuine Christian benevolence and sympathy. We can supplicate for others no higher good than grace and peace.

GERM NOTE ON THE VERSE.

Apostolic Introduction to the Epistle.

I. **The persons sending are mentioned.**—"Paul, Silvanus, and Timotheus." 1. *Paul is not here called an apostle, because his apostleship was granted.* 2. *Silvanus and Timotheus had assisted in planting and watering this Church.*

II. **The persons addressed are introduced and described.**—1. *The epistle was addressed to believers.* 2. *The Church is presented in an interesting point of view* (John xvii. 20). The Father and the Mediator are one in redemption; into this union the Church is received. 1. *The blessings desired*

are grace and peace. Sovereign mercy and favour and reconciliation. 2. *These are mentioned in their proper order of time, of cause and effect.* 3. *These are traced to their proper source.* The Father—the Godhead; the Son—all fulness.—*Stewart.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 2—4.

Ministerial Thanksgiving.

Gratitude for the healthy, flourishing state of the Thessalonian Church is a marked feature in both epistles, and is frequently expressed. The apostle left the young converts in a critical condition, and when he heard from Timothy a favourable account of their steadfastness and growth in grace, like a true minister of Christ he gave God thanks.

I. **Ministerial thanksgiving is expansive in its character.**—"We give thanks always for you all" (ver. 2). It is our duty, and acceptable to God, to be grateful for personal benefits; but it displays a broader, nobler generosity when we express thanksgiving on behalf of others. It is Christ-like: *He* thanked God the Father for revealing the things of His kingdom unto babes. The apostle thanked God:—

1. *Because of their work of faith.*—"Remembering without ceasing your work of faith" (ver. 3). *Faith is itself a work.* It is the eye and hand of the soul, by which the sinner sees and lays hold on Christ for salvation. Man meets with opposition in its exercise; he has to fight against the faith-stifling power of sin in himself and in the world. *Faith is also the cause of work.* It is the propelling and sustaining motive in all Christian toil. "Faith without works is dead."

2. *Because of their labour of love.*—The strength of love is tested by its labour; we show our love to Christ by what we do for Him. Love intensifies every faculty, moves to benevolent exertion, and makes even drudgery an enjoyment. Love leads us to attempt work from which we would once have shrunk in dismay.

3. *Because of their patient hope.*—Their hope of salvation in Christ was severely tried by affliction, persecutions, and numberless temptations, but was not quenched. It is hard to hope on in the midst of discouragement. It was so with Joseph in prison, with David in the mountains of Judah, with the Jews in Chaldea. But the grace of *patience* gives constancy and perseverance to our hope. The apostle rejoiced in the marked *sincerity* of their faith, love, and hope, which he acknowledged to be "in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." These virtues are derived alone from Christ, and their exercise God witnesses and approves. Things are in reality what they are in God's sight. His estimate is infallible.

4. *Because assured of their election.*—"Knowing, brethren beloved of God, your election" (ver. 4). St. Paul here means only to show how he, from the way in which the Spirit operated in him at a certain place, drew a conclusion as to the disposition of the persons there. Where it manifested itself powerfully, argued he, there must be elect; where the contrary was the case, he concluded the contrary (*Olshausen*). Election is the judgment of divine grace, exempting in Christ from the common destruction of men those who accept their calling by faith. Every one who is called is elected from the first moment of his faith, and so long as he continues in his calling and faith he continues to be elected; if at any time he loses calling and faith he ceases to be elected (*Bengel*). Observe the *constancy* of this thanksgiving spirit—"We give thanks *always* for you all." As they remembered without ceasing the genuine evidences of their conversion, so did they assiduously thank God. There is always something to thank God for if we will but see it.

II. **Ministerial thanksgiving evokes a spirit of practical devotion.**—"Making mention of you in our prayers" (ver. 2). The interest in his converts of the successful worker is keenly aroused; he is anxious the work should be permanent, and resorts to prayer as the effectual means. Prayer for others benefits the suppliant. When the Church prayed, not only was Peter liberated from prison, but the faith of the members was emboldened. Gratitude is ever a powerful incentive to prayer. It penetrates the soul with a conscious dependence on God, and prompts the cry for necessary help. There is no true prayer without thanksgiving.

III. **Ministerial thanksgiving is rendered to the great Giver of all good.**—"We give thanks to God" (ver. 2). God is the Author of true success. In vain we labour where His blessing is withheld. Paul was not equally successful in other places as in Thessalonica. In Damascus, where he first bore testimony for Christ, the governor under King Aretas planned his capture, and he but narrowly escaped. At Lystra the apostle was violently stoned and dragged out of the town as one dead. But at Thessalonica, notwithstanding opposition, the gospel laid firm hold of the hearts of men, and believers were multiplied. The highest kind of success in spiritual work must ever come from above. Like Paul, we should be careful constantly to acknowledge and thank God as the active source of all prosperity.

Lessons.—1. *There is much in the work of the minister to test his patience and faith.* 2. *The true minister gratefully traces all success directly to God.* 3. *A thankful spirit prompts the minister to increased Christian enterprise.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 2. *Thanksgiving and Prayer.*

I. **The apostle had the burden of all the Churches and their individual members.**

II. **The effect of the remembrance on himself.**—1. *He gives thanks.* They were the seals of his ministry, the recipients of the grace of God, the earnest of a more abundant harvest.

2. *He prays.*—They had not fully attained. They were in danger. None trusts less to human means than the most richly qualified.—*Stewart.*

Ver. 3. *Grace and Good Works.*

I. **All inward graces ought to bloom into active goodness.**—1. *Faith is to work.* 2. *Love is to labour.* 3. *Hope is to endure.*

II. **All active goodness must be rooted in some inward grace.**—1. *The root of work is faith.* 2. *The spring of labour is in love.* 3. *We need to refresh ourselves by a perpetual onward glance, a confident anticipation of the coming triumph.*—*Local Preacher's Treasury.*

Ver. 4. *Election of God.*

I. **There is an eternal election.**

II. **Which comes out in the election made in time.**

III. **Let us rejoice in it, for apart from it none would be saved.**—*Stewart.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 5.

The Gospel in Word and in Power.

You have passed through a bleak, barren moorland, where the soil seemed sown with stones and disfigured with stumps of trees, and the only signs of vegetable life were scattered patches of heather and flowerless lichen. After a while, you have again traversed the same region, and observed fields of grain ripening for the harvest, and budding saplings giving promise of the future forest. Whence this transformation? The cultivator has been at work. Not

less apparent was the change effected in Thessalonica by the diligent toil and faithful preaching of the apostles. We have here two prominent features in the successful declaration of the gospel.

I. **The gospel in word.**—"Our gospel came unto you in word." In the history of the introduction of the gospel into Thessalonica (Acts xvii.) we learn the leading themes of apostolic preaching. "Paul . . . reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ" (vers. 2, 3). It is worthy of note that the inspired apostle grounded his discourse on the Holy Scriptures. Even *he* did not feel himself free from their sacred bonds. The apostle's preaching embraced three leading topics:—

1. *He demonstrates that the promised Messiah was to be a suffering Messiah.*—The mind of the Jewish people was so dazed with the splendid prophecies of the regal magnificence and dominion of Jesus, that they overlooked the painful steps by which alone He was to climb to this imperial greatness: the steps of suffering that bore melancholy evidence of the load of anguish under which the world's Redeemer staggered—steps crimsoned with the blood of the sacred victim. Out of their Scriptures he proved that the only Messiah referred to there was to be a "Man of sorrows."

2. *He demonstrates that the Messiah who was thus to suffer and die was to rise again.*—This declared the divine dignity of His person, and was the pledge of the future success and eternal stability of His redeeming work.

3. *He insisted that the Jesus who thus suffered, died, and rose again was none other than the identical Messiah promised in their Scriptures.*—The grand topic of apostolic preaching must be the staple theme of the pulpit to-day—JESUS CHRIST: Christ suffering, Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ regnant and triumphant. When John Huss was in prison at Constance for the gospel's sake, he dreamt that his chapel at Prague was broken into and all the pictures of Christ on the walls destroyed. But immediately he beheld several painters in the chapel, who drew a greater number of pictures, and more exquisitely beautiful than those that had perished. While gazing on these with rapture, the sanctuary suddenly filled with his beloved congregation, and the painters, addressing them, said, "Now, let the bishops and priests come and destroy *these* pictures!" The people shouted for joy. Huss heartily joined them, and amid the acclamation awoke. So modern unbelievers may try to expunge the pictures of Christ familiar to the mind for generations, and to some extent they may succeed. But the divine Artist, with graving-tool of gospel word, will trace on the tablet of the soul an image more beautiful and enduring than that which has been destroyed; and by-and-by a universe of worshippers shall rejoice with thundering acclaim, while recognising in each other the reproduction of the image of Him whose visage was once marred more than any man's, but whose face now gleams with celestial beauty and is radiant with the lustre of many crowns.

II. **The gospel in power.**—"Not in word only, but also in power."

1. *In the exercise of miraculous power.*—The apostles were specially invested with this power, and used it in substantiating the great facts of the gospel.

2. *In the Holy Ghost.*—Not only in His miraculous manifestations necessary in that age, but in the ordinary exercise of His power, as continued down to the present day—enlightening, convincing, renewing.

3. *With much assurance.*—Literally, with full assurance, and much of it. Πληροφορία—full conviction—is from a word that means to *fill up*, and is used to denote the hurrying a ship on her career, with all her sails spread and filled with the wind. So the soul, filled with the full conviction of truth, is urged to a course of conduct in harmony with that conviction.

4. *An assurance enforced by high integrity of character.*—"As ye know what

manner of men we were among you, for your sake." Their earnest labours and upright lives showed they were men moved by profound conviction—a blending of evidence that is not less potent in these days.

Lessons.—1. *To receive the gospel in word only is disastrous.*—In a certain mountainous region under the tropics the stillness of night is sometimes broken by a loud, sharp report, like the crack of a rifle. What causes this strange, alarming sound? It is the splitting of rocks charged with the intense heat of the tropical sun. Day by day the sun throws down its red-hot rays of fire, and bit by bit the rock, as it cools, is riven and crumbles into ruin. So is it with the mere hearer of the word. The gospel pours upon him its light and heat, and his heart, hardened with long and repeated resistance, becomes damaged by that which is intended to better it.

2. *The gospel must be received in power.*—What is wanted is strong, deep, faith-compelling conviction—conviction of the awful truth and saving power of the gospel. To be a mighty force, man must have clear, solid, all-powerful convictions.

GERM NOTE ON THE VERSE.

Ver. 5. *The Manner in which the Gospel comes to the Believing Soul.*

I. **The first is negative.**—"The gospel came not in word only." This description embraces various classes of persons. 1. *Such as hear the gospel habitually without understanding it.* 2. *Such as partially understand the gospel without feeling its sanctifying influence.* 3. *Such as are affected by it only for a limited time.*

II. **In contradistinction to such, the gospel came to the believing Thessalonians in power.**—1. *Power over the understanding.* 2. *Power over the conscience.* 3. *Power over the heart.* 4. *Power over the life.*

III. **In the Holy Ghost.**—Explains the former. 1. *The message was that of the Spirit.* 2. *The apostles were filled with the Spirit.* 3. *Signs and miraculous proofs were furnished by the Spirit.* 4. *An entrance for the word was procured by the Spirit.*

IV. **In much assurance.**—1. *Fulness of apprehension.* 2. *Fulness of belief*—the result. 3. *Fulness of consequent hope.*—*Stewart.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 6—8.

The Practical Result of a True Reception of the Gospel.

Christianity transforms man, fills the mind with pure and lofty thoughts, turns the current of his feelings into the right channel, makes the soul luminous with ever-brightening hopes, and transfigures his sin-stricken nature into a semblance of the dignity, beauty, and perfection of the divine. Observe its influence on the mixed population of Thessalonica.

I. **The true reception of the gospel.**—"Having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost" (ver. 6). The word may fall on the ear like a sweet strain of music, and charm the soul with temporary rapture, may enter the understanding as a clearly apprehended truth, may captivate the affections, and travel through the whole sphere of emotion on a thrill of ecstasy; but unless it be embraced by the heart and conscience, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, it is powerless in spiritual reformation. Two opposite, but often strangely blended, emotions—sorrow and joy—were exercised in the reception of the gospel by the Thessalonians.

1. *They received the word in sorrow.*—"In much affliction." Amid the tumult and persecution of the citizens (Acts xvii. 5-9). Principally, sorrow on account of sin, and because of their prolonged rejection of Christ and obstinate disobedience.

2. *They received the word with joy.*—"With joy of the Holy Ghost." They realised the joy of *conscious forgiveness and acceptance with God.* The sinless angels, placed beyond the necessity of pardon, are incapable of experiencing this joy. It belongs exclusively to the believing penitent. *The joy of suffering for the truth.* Cyprian, who suffered for the gospel, used to say, "It is not the pain but the cause that makes the martyr." That cause is the cause of truth. Suffering is limited, life itself is limited, but truth is eternal. To suffer for that truth is a privilege and a joy. *The joy of triumph,* over error, sin, Satan, persecution. This joy is the special product of the Holy Ghost. These twin feelings—sorrow and joy—are typical of the ever-alternating experience of the believer throughout his earthly career.

II. **The practical result of the true reception of the gospel.**—1. *They became imitators of the highest patterns of excellence.* "Ye became followers of us and of the Lord" (ver. 6). The example of Christ is the absolute, all-perfect standard of moral excellence. But this does not supersede the use of inferior models. The planets have their season to guide and instruct us, as well as the sun, and we can better bear the moderated light of their borrowed splendour. The bravery of the common soldier, as well as the capacity and heroism of the most gifted officer, may stimulate a regiment to deeds of valour. So the apostles, in their patient endurance of suffering, their enterprising zeal and blameless integrity of life, became examples for their converts to imitate, while they pointed to the great infallible Pattern after which the noblest life must ever be moulded.

2. *They became examples to others.*—"So that ye were ensamples to all that believe" (ver. 7). *In the reality and power of their faith.* They eagerly embraced the word preached, believing it to be not the word of men but of God. This gave a profound reality to their conceptions of the gospel and a strong impulse to their active religious life. *In their zealous propagation of the truth.* "For from you sounded out the word of the Lord" (ver. 8). Wherever they travelled they proclaimed the gospel. They imparted that which had enriched themselves, and which, in giving, left them still the richer. *The influence of their example was extensive in its range.* "Not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything" (ver. 8). Macedonia and Achaia were two Roman provinces that comprised the territory known as ancient Greece. Thessalonica, the metropolis of Macedonia, was the chief station on the great Roman road—the Via Egnatia—which connected Rome with the whole region north of the Ægean Sea, and was an important centre both for commerce and the spread of intelligence. Wherever the trade of the merchant city extended, there the fame of the newly founded Church penetrated. Great was the renown of their own Alexander, the Macedonian monarch, and brilliant his victories; but the reputation of the Thessalonian Christians was of a higher order, and their achievements more enduring.

Lessons.—1. *The gospel that brings sorrow to the heart brings also joy.* 2. *A genuine reception of the truth changes the man and creates unquenchable aspirations after the highest good.* 3. *A living example is more potent than the most elaborate code of precepts.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 6, 7. *The Evidences and Effects of Revival.*

I. **Receivers.**—With faith, with joy, not without trial.

II. **Followers.** — Apostolic piety. Christ-like spirit. Multiplication of Christ-like men.

III. **Ensamples.**—Centres of Christian influence.

IV. **Dispensers.**—Induced to diffuse

the gospel by their gratitude for the special grace which had brought it to them with saving power, by their supreme attachment to its vital truths and their experience of the suitableness of these truths to their wants as sinners, by their commiseration for those who were yet in a state of nature, by their love to the Lord Jesus, by the express command of God, by the hope of reward. —*G. Brooks.*

Ver. 8. *The Power of Example*—

I. **In a faithful declaration of the gospel.**

II. **In its far-reaching influence on others.**

III. **Speaks for itself, rendering explanation unnecessary.**

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

Conversion and its Evidence.

A good work cannot be hid. Sooner or later it will manifest itself and become the general topic of a wide region. The successful worker meets with the fruit of his labours at times and places unexpected. Wherever the apostles went, the reputation of the newly founded Church had preceded them, and the varied features of the great change that had passed over the Thessalonians were eagerly discussed. We have here a description of conversion and its evidence.

I. **The conversion of the Thessalonians.**—"For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols" (ver. 9). You have watched a vessel lying at anchor in a tidal river with her bowsprit pointing seaward. After a brief interval you have observed the force of the incoming tide swing the vessel completely round, so that her head points in an exactly opposite direction. Not less apparent was the change among the Thessalonians when the flood-tide of gospel blessing entered the city. Conversion is a turning about—a change from sin to holiness, from unbelief to faith, from darkness to light, from Satan to God.

1. *They turned from idols.*—For generations the majority of the members of this Church, with their forefathers, had been idolaters, "walking as other Gentiles walked in the vanity of their mind," etc. (Eph. iv. 17, 18, ii. 12). *Any creature, real or imaginary, invested with divine properties is an idol.* An angel, a saint, wealth, an idea, or any object to which we ascribe the omnipotence that belongs to God, becomes to us an idol—a false deity. *An idol is also the true God falsely conceived.* The Pantheist, mistaking the effect for the cause, regards the vast fabric of created things as God, and Nature, with her grand, silent motions, is the object of his idolatry. The sensualist, reluctant to believe in punishment for sin, exalts the boundlessness of divine mercy, and ignores the other perfections, without which there could be no true God. Idolatry is a sin against which the most faithful warnings have been uttered in all ages, and on account of which the most terrible judgments have been inflicted, yet it is the worship to which man is most prone.

2. *They turned to God.*—The *one* God whom Paul preached as "the God that made the world and all things therein"; the living God, having life in Himself, and "giving to all life and breath and all things"; the *true* God, having in Himself the truth and substance of essential deity, in extreme contrast with an "idol, which is nothing in the world." With shame and confusion of face as they thought of the past, with penitential sorrow, with confidence and hope, they turned to God from idols.

II. **The evidence of their conversion.**—Seen: 1. *In the object of their service.* They "serve the living and true God," serve Him in faithful obedience to every command, serve Him in the face of opposition and persecution—with every faculty of soul, body, and estate—in life, in suffering, in death. *This is a free,*

loving service. The idolater is enslaved by his own passions and the iron bands of custom. His worship is mechanical, without heart and without intelligence. The service acceptable to God is the full, spontaneous, pure outflow of a loving and believing heart. *It is an ennobling service.* Man becomes like what he worships; and as the object of his worship is often the creation of his own depraved mind, he is debased to the level of his own gross, polluted ideas. Idolatry is the corrupt human heart feeding upon and propagating its own ever-growing corruptions. The service of God lifts man to the loftiest moral pinnacle and transfigures him with the resplendent qualities of the Being he adores and serves. *It is a rewardable service.* It brings rest to the world-troubled spirit, fills with abiding happiness in the present life, and provides endless felicity in the future—results idolatry can never produce.

2. *Seen in the subject of their hope.*—"And to wait for His Son" (ver. 10). (1) Their hope was fixed on *Christ as a Saviour.* "Even Jesus, who delivereth us from the coming wrath." Terrible will be the revelation of that wrath to the impenitent and unbelieving. As soon as one wave of vengeance breaks another will follow, and behind that another and another interminably, so that it will ever be *the wrath to come!* From this Jesus delivers even now. (2) Their hope was fixed on *Christ as risen.* "Whom He raised from the dead." They waited for and trusted in no dead Saviour, but One who, by His resurrection from the dead, was powerfully declared to be indeed the Son of God. (3) Their hope was fixed on *Christ as coming again.* "To wait for His Son from heaven." There is a confusing variety of opinions as to the *character* of Christ's second advent; as to the *certainty* of it nothing is more plainly revealed. The exact period of the second coming is veiled in obscurity and uncertainty; but it is an evidence of conversion to be ever waiting for and preparing for that coming as if there were a perpetual possibility of an immediate manifestation. The uncertainty of the time has its use in fostering a spirit of earnest and reverential inquiry, of watchfulness, of hope, of fidelity.

Lessons.—1. *Conversion is a radical change.* 2. *Conversion is a change conscious to the individual and evident to others.* 3. *The gospel is the divinely appointed agency in conversion.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 9, 10. *The Change effected by the Gospel—*

I. **In religious belief.**

II. **In corresponding conduct.**

III. **In the hope cherished.**—1. *Of the second coming of Christ.* 2. *Proved by His resurrection from the dead.* 3. *The object of His second coming to deliver from wrath.* 4. *The spirit of earnest but patient waiting induced.*

Ver. 10. *The Christian waiting for his Deliverer—*

I. **Implies a firm belief in Christ's second coming.**

II. **Habitually endeavouring to be prepared for His second coming.**

III. **Earnestly desiring it.**

IV. **Patiently waiting for it.**—*Bradley.*

The Wrath to come.

I. **It is divine wrath.**

II. **Unmingled wrath.**—Judgment without mercy; justice without the least mixture of goodness.

III. **Provoked wrath.**

IV. **Accumulated wrath.**—A wrath we have inflamed and increased by every act of sin we have committed.

V. **Future wrath.**—The wrath to come; lasting as the holiness of the Being who inflicts and the guilt of the sinners who endure it.

VI. **Deliverance from wrath.**—1. *Undeserved.* 2. *Complete.* 3. *Eternal.*—*Ibid.*

CHAPTER II.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Our entrance in . . . was not in vain.**—The word for "vain" here is the same as that in the first half of "ceno-taph." The entrance into Thessalonica, we might say colloquially, "had something in it."

Ver. 2. **Suffered before.**—Previously, that is, to our entrance to Thessalonica. **And were shamefully entreated.**—The acute sense of suffering in mind shows how far St. Paul was from Stoicism. It is this same exquisite sensibility which makes possible the beautiful courtesy with which, in his letters, we are so familiar. **With much contention.**—All the watchfulness required by one in the arena and all the danger incident to a false movement characterised St. Paul's work.

Ver. 3. **For our exhortation.**—The word reminds us of Christ's word, "I will send you another Advocate"—"Paraclete." Our advocacy of the gospel of Christ was not born of error. **Was not of deceit, nor uncleanness, nor guile.**—Perhaps we might paraphrase thus: We were not ourselves mistaken as to the subject-matter of our preaching, we used no "dirty tricks" in the way of its publication, we baited no hooks for unwilling souls.

Ver. 4. **As we were allowed of God.**—The original word means "to approve after testing"—or, as God knows without testing, as it is applied to Him it simply means—"we were approved of God." **To be put in trust.**—R.V. "to be intrusted." "'To be put in trust with the gospel' is the highest conceivable responsibility; the sense of it is enough to exclude every base motive and deceitful practice" (*Findlay*). **Not as pleasing men.**—The vice condemned in slaves is equally reprehensible if it should appear in the minister of the gospel. **But God, which trieth the hearts.**—"Alloweth" and "trieth" are different forms of the same verb. Like an assayer whose methods are perfect, God makes manifest what is in man's heart.

Ver. 5. **For neither at any time used we flattering words.**—"His friends well knew that he was not one to

> 'Crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
> Where thrift may follow fawning'" (*Ibid.*).

Nor a cloke of covetousness.—The same thing perhaps as a mode of flattering speech. Fulsome flattering is either the mark of a mind hopelessly abject or the craft of a designing mind. Much fair speech and the flattering of the lips still lead fools by the nose (Prov. vii. 21) to where "covetousness" dwells.

Ver. 6. **Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others.**—"The motive of ambition—'that last infirmity of noble minds'—rises above the selfishness just disclaimed; but it is just as warmly repudiated, for it is equally inconsistent with the single-mindedness of men devoted to the glory of God. Our Lord finds in superiority to human praise the mark of a sincere faith (John v. 44)" (*Ibid.*). **When we might have been burdensome.**—A.V. margin, "used authority." R.V. margin, "claimed honour"—literally in weight—an ambiguous phrase whose sense is interpreted by ver. 9 (*Ibid.*).

Ver. 7. **But we were gentle.**—R.V. margin says, "Most ancient authorities read babes." Origen and Augustine interpret this to mean, "Like a nurse amongst her children, talking in baby language to the babes" (*Ibid.*). **As a nurse cherisheth her children.**—The A.V. has omitted a necessary word of the original which R.V. supplies—"her *own* children." The word for "cherisheth" is used in Deut. xxii. 5 (LXX.) of the mother-bird brooding over her nestlings (a figure made memorable by our Lord's mournful words over Jerusalem). The word occurs again only in Eph. v. 29.

Ver. 8. **Being affectionately desirous.**—The one Greek word corresponding to these three "implies the fondness of a mother's love—yearning over you" (*Ibid.*). **We were willing.**—R.V. "well-pleased." Like Him of whom it is said, "He gives liberally," without stint. **Our own souls.**—"Our very selves," for the saving of which, says our Master, a man may well let the world slip. The apostle keeps up the maternal figure.

Ver. 9. **Labour and travail.**—The same words occur together at 2 Cor. xi. 27. The former is used some twenty times, the latter only three in the New Testament. One marks the fatigue of the work, "the lassitude or weariness which follows on this straining of all his powers to the utmost" (*Trench*). The other gives prominence to the hardship or difficulty of the task. **That we might not burden any of you** (see ver. 6).—Any support that could have been given would have been a trifle indeed (1 Cor. ix. 11) as compared with the self-sacrifice of the apostolic toilers.

Ver. 10. **Ye are witnesses, and God also.**—A solemn reiteration (see ver. 5). **Holily and justly and unblameably.**—"The holy man has regard to the sanctities, the righteous man to the duties of life; but duty is sacred and piety is duty. They cover the whole field of conduct regarded in turn from the religious and moral standpoint, while unblamably affixes the seal of approval both by God and man" (*Findlay*).

Ver. 11. **Exhorted and comforted.**—As the former points to the stimulation in the apostolic addresses, so the latter to the soothing element. The noun related to the latter verb is found in Phil. ii. 1, and is translated by R.V. "*consolation.*" **As a father with his own children.**—The maternal tenderness is united with the discipline of a true father.

Ver. 12. **Walk worthy of God.**—St. Paul's "*Noblesse oblige.*"

Ver. 13. **The word of God which ye heard of us.**—R.V. "the word of the message, even the word of God." The preposition "*from* us" is "properly used in relation to objects which come from the *neighbourhood* of a person—out of his *sphere*" (*Winer*); but the word originates, not with Paul, but in God. **Which effectually worketh also.**—There is no original word corresponding to "effectually" here; but the word "worketh" of itself, unemphasised, is too weak. We might almost say "becomes energetic."

Ver. 14. **Became followers.**—R.V. "imitators." The usual meaning of imitators hardly seems to obtain in full strength here. We cannot think the Thessalonians consciously copied the Judean Christians, to do which they would have had the superfluous task of raising up opposition. The words seem to mean no more than, "Ye came to resemble." **Of your own countrymen.**—Lit. "fellow-tribesmen." One is reminded of Shylock's words—

"Sufferance is the badge of all our *tribe.*"

Ver. 15. **Who both killed.**—The New Testament form of the verb is always compound—as we should say, "killed off." A tragic contrast to what might have been expected is set forth in our Lord's parable. "It may be they will *reverence* My Son." . . . They cast Him out and *killed Him off* (Luke xx. 13-15). **Have persecuted us.**—A.V. margin, "chased us out." R.V. text, "drave." How deeply humbling was the thought to St. Paul, that he had at one time taken part in this hounding! The A.V. margin gives us a most vivid picture. **They please not God.**—This expression is thought by some to be a *meiosis*, a softening down of the hard reality by the negative form of the language. Is not the best comment found in John xvi. 2, "Whosoever killeth you shall think that he offereth service unto God"? The sophistry that makes "killing no murder" and sanctions an *auto da fé* is something quite other than pleasing to God. **Are contrary to all men.**—"The sense of God's displeasure often shows itself in sourness and ill temper towards one's fellows. Unbelief and cynicism go together. The rancour of the Jews against other nations at this time was notorious. . . . The quarrel between Judaism and the world, alas, still continues, as the *Judenhasse* of Germany and Russia testifies" (*Findlay*).

Ver. 16. **Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles.**—The very spirit of the dog in the manger! They would not even have left the "uncovenanted mercies" to the Gentiles. **To fill up their sins alway.**—The phrase signifies ripeness for judgment, and is used in Gen. xv. 16 of the Amorites in Abraham's time—an ominous parallel (*Ibid.*). **For the wrath.**—R.V., "*but* the wrath." As though he said, "But the end comes at last; they have always been sowing this harvest; now it has to be reaped" (*Ibid.*).

Ver. 17. **Being taken from you.**—R.V. "bereaved of you." St. Paul, absent from Thessalonica, feels like a parent who has lost a child, and regards them as children who feel the loss of a parent (see John xiv. 18).

Ver. 18. **But Satan hindered us.**—Lit. "beat us in." The figure is a military one, and indicates the obstruction of an enemy's progress by breaking up the road (destroying bridges, etc.).

Ver. 19. **Crown of rejoicing.**—R.V. "glorying." The victor's wreath. St. Paul regards his steadfast converts as the proof of his successful efforts.

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

Essential Elements of Success in Preaching. I. Boldness.

Outsiders testified of the success of the gospel, and the apostles could confidently appeal to the converts in confirmation of the report. "For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you that it was not in vain" (ver. 1). In the first twelve verses of this chapter Paul is describing the special features of their ministry, the manner and spirit of their preaching; and what he denies is, not so much that their labours had been vain, fruitless, and without result, as he denies that those labours were in themselves vain, frivolous, empty of all

human earnestness, and of divine truth and force. We trace in their ministerial endeavours four essential elements that are ever found in all successful preaching —boldness, sincerity, gentleness, moral consistency. Consider, first, their *boldness.*

I. **This boldness manifested in the earnest declaration of the truth.**—"We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention" (ver. 2). Bold in their conception of the divine origin and vast scope of the gospel, and its wondrous adaptation to the wants of universal man, they were not less bold in its faithful proclamation. Their deep conviction of the supreme authority of the truth gave them unusual courage. We see the same intrepid spirit in Paul on other occasions, when his fearless words roused the ire of Festus, shook the conscience of the thoughtless Felix, or swayed the heart of Agrippa towards a wise decision. We see it in Elijah as he rebuked the sins of the wicked Ahab with withering invectives, or threw the baffled priests of Baal into maddening hysteria—himself the while unmoved and confident. We see it conspicuously in *Him*, who came in the spirit and power of Elias, whose burning words assailed every form of wrong, and who did not scruple to denounce the deluded leaders of a corrupt Church in the most scathing terms—"Ye serpents! ye generation of vipers! How can ye escape the damnation of hell?" "*With much contention*"—amid much conflict and danger. This kind of preaching provoked opposition and involved them in great inward struggles. The faithful messenger of God fears not the most violent assault from without; but the thought of the fatal issues to those who obstinately reject and fight against the gospel fills him with agonising concern.

II. **This boldness no suffering could daunt.**—"Even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi" (ver. 2). They had come fresh from a city where they had been cruelly outraged. Though Roman citizens, they had been publicly scourged and, to add to their degradation, were thrust into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks—treatment reserved for the vilest felons. But so far from being dismayed, their sufferings only deepened their love for the gospel and inflamed the passion to make it known. A German professor has lately made experiments with chalcedony and other quartzose minerals, and he has demonstrated that when such stones are ground on large and rapidly revolving wheels they exhibit a brilliant phosphorescent glow throughout their entire mass. So is it with the resolute worker. The more he is ground under the strong wheel of suffering and persecution, the more intensely will his entire character glow with the radiance of an unquenchable bravery.

III. **This boldness was divinely inspired.**—"We were bold *in* our God" (ver. 2). It was not the froth of a senseless presumption, not the wild, aimless effort of a reckless bravado; but the calm, grand heroism of a profound faith in the divine. They fell back completely upon God, and drew their deepest inspiration and mightiest strength from Him. The prophet Jeremiah, in a moment of despondency, decided to "speak no more in the name of the Lord"; but when he could say, "The Lord is with me as a mighty, terrible One," his courage returned, and he obeyed implicitly the divine mandate, "Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak." Similarly commissioned, Paul once exclaimed, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Endowed with the like spirit, Luther uttered his noble protest at the Diet of Worms—"Here I stand: I cannot do otherwise: God help me!"

Lessons.—1. *Boldness is absolutely indispensable in attacking, not simply in the mass, but in detail, the crying evils of the age.* 2. *Boldness is acquired only by studious and prayerful familiarity with God's message and with God.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1, 2. *The Preaching of the Gospel not in Vain.*

I. **It is not in vain as respects the end and object of the gospel itself.**—1. *Conversion.* 2. *Sanctification or edification.* 3. *Condemnation.*

II. **It was not in vain as respected the objects of the apostle.**—1. *His commission was to preach the gospel.* He did it. 2. *To gather in souls.* He did so. 3. *His reward was the approbation of Christ and seals to His ministry.* He had both.

III. **It was not in vain as respected the Thessalonians.**—They were turned from idolatry; their hearts glowed with new feelings; their characters shone with new graces.—*Stewart.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 3—6.

Essential Elements of Success in Preaching. II. Sincerity.

The devout Richard Baxter once said: "The ministerial work must be managed purely for God and the salvation of the people, and not for any private ends of our own. This is our sincerity in it. A wrong end makes all the work bad from us, however good in itself." In order to success, it is necessary not only to display a fearless courage, but also a spirit of unmistakable ingenuousness and sincerity. As the mountain tarn reflects the clear, chaste light of the stars as they kindle in the heavens, so the preacher reflects in his outward conduct the pure and lofty motives by which he is animated and sustained. We observe, in connection with the preaching of the gospel at Thessalonica, sincerity in motive, in speech, in aim.

I. **Sincerity in motive.**—"For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile" (ver. 3). The apostle disclaims the harbouring of evil intentions in relation to God, himself, and others.

1. *In relation to God.*—"Not of deceit"—not in error. Having received the truth from God and about God, he transmits it in all its integrity, without error or imposture.

2. *In relation to himself.*—"Nor of uncleanness." Pure in his own affection and purpose, he preached a gospel that was pure in itself, in its tendency, and in its experienced results.

3. *In relation to others.*—"Not in guile." He sought not to propagate the gospel by any fraudulent wiles or false representations. He descended not to hypocrisy to catch men. "Hypocrites," says St. Bernard, "desire to seem not to be good; not to seem, but to be evil: they care not to follow or practise virtue, but to colour vice by putting upon it the painted complexion of virtue." The life of the man whose motives are thus sincere will be transparent as the light. A certain king of Castile, who had been only too familiar with the duplicity of mankind, once somewhat arrogantly said, "When God made man He left one capital defect: He ought to have set a window in his breast." The sincere man opens a window in his own breast by the whole tenor of His words and actions, so that his innermost thoughts are apparent.

II. **Sincerity in speech.**—1. *The preacher speaks under a solemn sense of responsibility.* "But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak" (ver. 4). To their charge, as men tested and approved of God, was committed the precious treasure of the gospel; and keenly conscious of the unutterable riches with which they were entrusted, they were deeply solicitous to distribute the same in all faithfulness and sincerity. Every gift we receive from Heaven has its corresponding responsibility.

2. *The preacher seeks chiefly the divine approval.*—"Not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts" (ver. 4). There is much in the gospel distasteful

to the natural man—its humiliating exposure of our depravity and helplessness, its holiness, its mysteries, the unbending severity of its law, and the absolute character of its claims. The temptation is sometimes great to temper and modify the truth to carnal prejudice, and sacrifice faithfulness to popularity. But the apostles risked everything so that they secured the divine approval. "As of sincerity, as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ."

3. *The preacher must practise neither adulation nor deception.*—"For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness, God is witness" (ver. 5). "Flattery," says Plutarch, "has been the ruin of many states." But alas! who can tell the souls it has for ever undone? Truth is too sedate and solid to indulge in meaningless flattery. It is only the vain and self-conceited who can be deceived by adulation.

III. **Sincerity in aim.**—"Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ" (ver. 6). The sincere aim of the apostles was seen:—

1. *In the generous suppression of the authority with which they were invested.*—"When we might have been burdensome as the apostles of Christ." Whether we understand this authority as exercised in foregoing for the time being their legitimate claim of maintenance by the Church, or as restraining the exhibition of the dignity and power of their apostleship—which latter view is generally admitted to be the true exegesis—it was equally honourable to the pure and disinterested character of their highest aim.

2. *In the absence of all selfish ambition.*—"Nor of men sought we glory." They could conscientiously aver, "We seek not yours, but you." "I love a serious preacher," says Fénélon, "who speaks for my sake and not for his own; who seeks my salvation and not his own glory." It is said of one of the ancient fathers that he wept at the applause frequently given to his discourses. "Would to God," said he, "they had rather gone away silent and thoughtful!" It is a sorry and painfully disappointing end to preach for mere ephemeral human praise. Such a man may sink into the grave with the touching lament of Grotius, "Alas! I have lost my life in doing nothing with great labour!"—though in his case it was an unduly despondent estimate of his life-work. When Christ is to be exalted, the preacher must be willing to be unnoticed.

Lessons.—1. *Sincerity in proclaiming the truth can be acquired only by personal experience of its power.* 2. *Sincerity is deepened by a conscious divine commission.* 3. *Sincerity is unmistakably evidenced in word and deed.* 4. *Sincerity is satisfied only in aiming at the highest results in preaching.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 3-6. *Apostolic Preaching characterised by Transparent Truth.*

I. **The doctrine was opposed to every form of impurity** (ver. 3).—1. *It was itself pure.* 2. *It received no tinge of impurity from the apostle's mind.* 3. *Its results were pure.*

II. **The preaching was free from insincerity and selfishness** (ver. 4).—1. *They avoided flattery.* Love of favour (ver. 5). 2. *They avoided covetousness.* Aggrandisement (ver. 5). 3. *They avoided vainglory.* Love of applause (ver. 6). Three rocks on which thousands have been shipwrecked.—*Stewart.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7, 8.

Essential Elements of Success in Preaching. III. Gentleness.

There is a power in gentleness to subdue the wildest, mightiest opposition, and to triumph over the most gigantic difficulties. The gentle rays of the

sun melt the ponderous iceberg more speedily than the rolling billows of an angry ocean; the silent action of the atmosphere wastes the rock which remains immovable under the strokes of the heaviest weapon; a look from Moses vanquished the calf-idolatry of the Israelites which the fluent eloquence of Aaron had been powerless to resist; a calm, quiet word from Jesus paralysed with fear the band of soldiers who came to arrest Him in Gethsemane. True gentleness is never weak. It is the tough, indestructible material out of which is formed the hero and the martyr. This quality was conspicuous in the preachers at Thessalonica.

I. **It was the gentleness of patient endurance.**—1. *It enabled them to bear the insult and outrage of their enemies.* Their preaching roused violent opposition. They retaliated by praying for their persecutors. Against physical force they fought with moral weapons; and this attitude and policy had a powerful influence on their enraged adversaries. The modern preacher can adopt no better method. The offence of the cross has not yet ceased. It stirs up all the enmity of the carnal mind. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." The power of a man is seen, not so much in what he can do, as in what he can endure. It is only the Christian spirit that unites the utmost gentleness with the utmost strength.

2. *It enabled them to bear with the weakness and imperfections of their converts.*—"As a nurse cherisheth her children" (ver. 7)—as a nursing mother cherisheth her own children. They watched over them with the tenderest assiduity, instructed them with the most disinterested solicitude, accommodated and assimilated themselves to their infant standpoint with all the devotion of a fond, painstaking parent. In order to successful teaching, in spiritual as in secular subjects, we must study the child-nature—take into account the influence of environment, early prejudices, differing capacities and temperaments, and the direction of characteristic tendencies. See this illustrated in the divine treatment of the Israelites under Moses and the great Jewish leaders, and in the training of the twelve by the great Teacher.

II. **It was the gentleness of self-sacrificing love.**—"So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us" (ver. 8).

1. *This gentleness arose from a genuine love of human souls.*—"Because ye were dear unto us." Love is the great master-power of the preacher. After this he strives and toils with ever-increasing earnestness as the years speed on; and it is the grace that comes latest and slowest into the soul. No amount of scholastic attainment, of able and profound exposition, of brilliant and stirring eloquence, can atone for the absence of a deep, impassioned, sympathetic love of human souls. The fables of the ancients tell us of Amphion, who, with the music of his lyre, drew after him the huge stones with which to build the walls of Thebes, and of Orpheus, who, by his skill on the harp, could stay the course of rivers and tame the wildest animals. These are but exaggerated examples of the wondrous charm of the soul-compelling music of love. "I have always been afraid," said a devoted young minister, now no more, "of driving my people away from the Saviour. I would rather err on the side of drawing them." The seraphic John Fletcher once said, "Love, continual, universal, ardent love is the soul of all the labour of a minister."

2. *The intensity of their love awoke a spirit of voluntary self-sacrifice.*—"So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls." To accomplish the salvation of their hearers they were willing to surrender life itself. This was the temper of the divine Preacher who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister,

and to give His life." A similar spirit imbued the apostle when he assured the weeping elders of Ephesus in that pathetic interview on the lonely shore—"Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus." The love of science nerves the adventurous voyager to brave the appalling dangers of the arctic ice, amid which so many have found a crystal tomb; but a nobler love inspires the breast of the humble worker, who cheerfully sacrifices all this world holds dear to rescue men from woe.

Lessons.—1. *That gentleness is a power not only in patient endurance, but also in enterprising action.* 2. *That gentleness is indispensable to effectiveness, either in warning or reproof. It succeeds where a rigid austerity fails.* 3. *That gentleness is fostered and regulated by a deep, self-sacrificing love.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 7, 8. *Dealing with New Converts.*

I. **Divine principles have to unfold themselves in unfavourable circumstances.**—1. *Moral influence from without.* 2. *Jewish misrepresentation.* 3. *Persecution.*

II. **Must be treated with gentleness.**—1. *In the adaptation of teaching to suit their state.* 2. *In the manner and spirit of the instruction given.*

III. **Must be treated with affectionate self-sacrificingness** (ver. 8).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 9—12.

Essential Elements of Success in Preaching. IV. Moral Consistency.

The writer, in dwelling on the manner and spirit of preaching, has shown the necessity of boldness, sincerity, and gentleness as powerful instrumentalities in achieving success. In these verses he insists on the moral consistency of the individual life and conduct. As the time indicated on the dial answers to the perfect mechanism of the watch, so the personal example of the preacher must answer to the words he utters. The most accomplished elocution, the most impassioned and captivating utterance will be fruitless unless backed with the strength of a complete, well-rounded, all-beautiful spiritual character. Paul and his co-helpers could fearlessly appeal to their hearers, and in all humility to God, in attestation of the moral consistency of their private and public action.

I. **Their moral consistency seen in the unselfish principle that governed them in their work.**—"For ye remember, brethren, our labours and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable to any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God" (ver. 9). The apostle invariably asserted the obligation of ministerial maintenance by the Church. In another place he emphatically affirms that, not merely naked equity and the spirit of the Mosaic law, but also a positive ordinance of Christ requires that just as "they which ministered about holy things lived of the things of the temple, and they which waited at the altar were partakers with the altar, even so they which preach the gospel shall live of the gospel." In the special circumstances and early stage of the work at Thessalonica, the apostle waived this righteous claim. It might be on account of the poverty of the majority of the converts, or more probably on account of the charge of covetousness their enemies had diligently circulated. To crush all suspicion of interested motives and self-seeking, those noble missionaries refused "to be chargeable unto any one of them," depending for their support upon the occasional remittances of the liberal Philippians, and on their own manual labour. Thus did they evidence their supreme desire to be, not

mercenary gain, but the proclamation of the gospel of God—an example which has its counterpart in the brave, devoted, self-denying labours of many a modern missionary.

II. **Their moral consistency seen in the maintenance of a blameless deportment.**—"Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe" (ver. 10). A Roman prince of the celebrated house of Colonna, whose virtues had sustained him alike in prosperous and adverse times, was once driven into exile, and when reduced to extremity was asked, "Where is now your fortress?" He laid his hand upon his heart, and answered, "Here!" A conscious sense of integrity threw a strength and majesty around him in the midst of poverty and suffering. It was an inward consciousness of purity that prompted these Christian workers to appeal to those who were best acquainted with their walk and conversation. They behaved holily toward God, justly toward men, and unblamably in all things. "Among them that believe." Believers could best understand the secret of their whole life, its aims and motives, its tendencies and issues, and on them it would have an irresistible impression. It is often the fate of the public teacher, while blameless, to be unmercifully blamed by those who are outside the circle of his work. The world retains all its historic enmity to the truth, and is as venomous as ever in its expression.

> No might, nor greatness in mortality
> Can censure 'scape: back-wounding calumny
> The whitest virtue strikes."

III. **Their moral consistency seen in their persistent endeavours to stimulate their converts to the highest attainments.**—1. *This is evident in the lofty standard set up.* "That ye walk worthy of God" (ver. 12). How sublime and dignified the Christian character may become—to walk worthily of God!—in harmony with His nature, His law, with our profession of attachment to Him. To the production of this grand result all their efforts were bent. "As a father doth his children," so they "exhorted" with all earnestness, "comforted" with all loving sympathy, and "charged" with all fidelity and authority. The preacher must be master of every art necessary to success.

2. *This is evident in the sublime motive that should animate us in reaching the standard.*—The divine, heavenly calling. "Who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory" (ver. 12)—His own glorious kingdom. We are invited to enter this kingdom on earth, and participate in its blessings; but the full splendours of that kingdom are reserved for the heavenly world. How brief and insignificant will the sufferings and sorrows of the present appear, contrasted with the ineffable bliss of the future state! "Do you want anything?" eagerly asked the loved ones who surrounded the dying couch of Melancthon. "Nothing but heaven," was the gentle response, and he went smiling on his way.

Lessons.—1. *In order to success in preaching moral consistency of life must accompany and sustain the faithful declaration of the truth.* 2. *That the greatest success is achieved when the highest experience of the Christian life is constantly enforced by both precept and example.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 9-12. *The High Moral Feeling that should influence the Preacher.*—Illustrated by Paul's work and conduct.

I. **In preaching the gospel.**

II. **In labouring for his own support.**

III. **In his behaviour.**—1. *Towards God.* "Holily." 2. *Towards others.* "Justly." 3. *Unblamable.* Prudent and inoffensive. He could appeal to man and God.—*Stewart.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 13.

The Correct Estimate of Gospel Truth.

We have before stated that the population of Thessalonica consisted of two diverse classes, Greek and Jew—the one representing the philosophy of paganism, the other being the custodian of the sacred truths of Revelation. Among the Hebrews Moses was recognised as the central human figure and head of their legal system, and his words were profoundly venerated; and the Gentiles were not less devout and ardent in their admiration of Plato and his far-seeing wisdom. The influence of these two systems was all-potent with the Thessalonians; it supplied thought, moulded character and life, and filled up the widest circle of their hopes. The gospel impinged upon these ancient and revered institutions, and they reeled beneath the shock. The bigoted followers of Moses and Plato were compelled to admit the higher authority of the apostolic message. They formed a correct estimate of gospel truth when they "received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God."

I. **The gospel is superior to all human wisdom.**—It is "not the word of men." 1. *Human wisdom is limited in its range.* The greatest mind is restricted in its knowledge, and imperfect in using what it knows. A celebrated Roman scholar once exclaimed with petulance and disgust: "The human mind wanders in a diseased delirium, and it is therefore not surprising that there is no possible folly which philosophers, at one time or another, have not propounded as a lesson of wisdom."

2. *Human wisdom is changeable.*—Aristotle, the great father of natural philosophy, summed up his impressions on this subject with his usual hard, unyielding logic when he said: "There is no difference between what men call knowledge and mere opinion; therefore, as all opinion is uncertain, there can be no certainty in human knowledge."

3. *Human wisdom is unsatisfying.*—It is with a sigh of bitter disappointment that one of the most profound thinkers of antiquity concluded his long and deep inquiry into human affairs, and summed up the result with these sad, melancholy words: "Nothing can be known; nothing therefore can be learned; nothing can be certain; the senses are limited and delusive; intellect is weak; life is short!"

II. **The gospel is essentially divine.**—1. *It is authoritative.* There is an old proverb, "When the lion roars, the beasts of the forest tremble." So when the gospel speaks, unbelievers may well be filled with fear. Milton thus describes Adam in his innocency advancing to meet his celestial visitor: He

> "walks forth without more train
> Accompanied than with His own complete
> Perfections: in Himself was all His state."

In like manner God's word comes to us clothed with the majesty and authority of its own innate power. It bends the ear to attention, the mind to faith, the heart to reverence, the will and conscience to obedience.

2. *It is immutable.*—It is "the word of the Lord that liveth and abideth for ever." (1) Its promises are sure; (2) its threatenings will certainly be executed.

3. *It is complete.*—There is nothing to add, nothing to subtract. It contains the fullest revelation of God, of man, of eternal issues—such as can never be found elsewhere.

4. *It is worthy of universal credence.*—"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." It is to the everlasting commendation of the Thessalonians, and of millions since their day, that when they heard the word of God they "received it, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God."

III. **The gospel is efficacious in transforming character.**—"Which effec-

tually worketh also in you that believe." As the planet receiving the light of the sun is transformed into an imitation sun, so the believing soul receiving the light of the word is changed into the image of that word. Whatever the divine word prescribes, *that* it works in us. Does it prescribe repentance?—it works repentance; faith?—it works faith; obedience?—it works obedience; knowledge?—it enlightens to know. Its transforming power is continually demonstrated. It makes the niggardly generous, the profane holy, the drunkard sober, the profligate chaste. Faith is the vital force that connects the soul with this converting power.

IV. **The correct estimate of gospel truth is matter of ceaseless thanksgiving to the preacher.**—"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing." No disappointment is keener to the anxious preacher than that of unproductive labour. Some of the choicest ministers of God have to mourn over comparative failure. Think of the anguish of the sympathetic Jeremiah when the word of the Lord which he declared was turned into daily reproach and derision; and of Ezekiel, when he wept over rebellious Israel! But the joy of success is irrepressible, and the full heart pours out its thanks to God. "They joy before Thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil."

Lessons.—1. *The word of man, while it may charm the understanding, is powerless to change the heart.* 2. *The correct estimate of gospel truth is to regard it as the word of God.* 3. *The word of God is efficacious to the individual only as it is received believingly.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSE.

The Efficacy of the Word of God and the Way of receiving it.

I. **The description given of the word.**—1. *The word not of men, but of God.* 2. *Known by its effects.* (1) Producing conviction of sin. (2) Binding up the broken heart.

II. **In what manner it should be received.**—1. *With attention and reverence.* 2. *With humility and teachableness.* 3. *As the instrument for conversion and edification.*—*E. Cooper.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 14.

Suffering: the Test of Conversion.

It often happens that suffering reveals new features of individual character, and awakens powers that were before dormant. It takes a great deal to thoroughly rouse some people. We are told that Agrippa had a dormouse that slumbered so profoundly that it would never wake till cast into a cauldron of boiling lead. So there are some natures which put forth all their powers only when in suffering and extremity. The piety of God's people has been most severely tested in the midst of persecution and affliction. The faith of thousands has failed in the hour of trial, while those who have borne the strain have gained an accession of moral nerve and bravery. The Thessalonians imitated the Churches in Judea in boldly facing the storm of malignant opposition, and standing under it with calm, unconquerable firmness.

I. **The suffering of the Thessalonians had a common origin.**—"For ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews." Just as the Jews who embraced Christianity met with the maddest violence from their own unbelieving countrymen, so the Gentiles found their fiercest foes among their fellow-countrymen, who blindly clung to the worship of the gods. It is the unkindest cut of all that comes from the sword of our own

people—people with whom we have lived in amity and concord, but from whom conscience compels us to differ. Who can fathom the deep anguish of the Psalmist sounding in that sharp, bitter cry of startled surprise, "For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it.; but it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance"! It was a horrible discovery of nature engaged in a terrible suicidal war with itself! Nature grown monstrously unnatural and savagely retaliating on its own: natural love turned into unnatural enmity! What a revelation, too, is this of the desperate nature of all persecution! Its insensate malice rudely sunders all bonds of fatherland, friendship, and kindred. The close affinity between Cain and Abel does not arrest the murderer's hand; the tender ties between Saul and David, woven with much reciprocal kindness and affection, avail not to curb the mad cruelty of the infuriate king. Ah! how deep and changeless is the truth, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The suffering that tests is still from the same source, "A man's foes are they of his own household."

II. **The suffering of the Thessalonians was borne with exemplary Christian fortitude.**—"For ye, brethren, became followers of the Churches of God, which in Judea are in Christ Jesus." The same thought is expressed in the first chapter, where the apostle says, "Ye became followers of us and of the Lord." For at the head of the long line is Jesus, the Captain of salvation; and all whom He leads to glory walk in His steps, imitate His example, and so become followers one of another. It is not, however, suffering in itself that purifies and exalts Christian character, so much as the spirit in which it is borne. The hardest point of obedience is to obey in suffering. It was enough to cool the fiery ambition of the aspiring disciples when Jesus said, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" And yet the following of Christ in suffering is the true test of discipleship. "He that taketh not his cross and followeth Me is not worthy of Me." It is a grand proof of the supernatural efficacy of gospel truth that it inspires so intense a love of it as to make us willing to endure the most exquisite suffering for its sake. The love of truth becomes supreme. John Huss, lamenting the rupture of an old and valued friendship, said: "Paletz is my friend; truth is my friend; and both being my friends, it is my sacred duty to give the first honour to truth." The soul, penetrated with this sublime devotion to truth, will pass unscathed the fiery test of suffering. On the destruction by fire of the London Alexandra Palace a few years ago, it was found that, while many specimens of old English porcelain exhibited there were reduced to a black, shapeless mass, the true porcelain of Bristol, though broken into fragments, still retained its whiteness, and even its most delicate shades of colour, uninjured by the fire. So the truly good, though wounded and maimed, shall survive the fiercest trial, and retain intact all that specially distinguishes and beautifies the Christian character.

Lessons.—1. *Our love of the gospel is tested by what we suffer for it.* 2. *The similarity of experience in all times and places is a strong evidence of the truth of the Christian religion.* 3. *Suffering does not destroy, but builds up and perfects.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 15, 16.

The Fury of the Old Religion against the New.

It is the natural order of things that the old must give place to the new. The inexorable operation of the law of progress is seen in a thousand different forms. In the world of vegetation the old life is continually yielding supremacy to the new. The leaves, buds, and blossoms of the tree, as they force their way to the light, fling their shadows on the grave where their predecessors lie decayed

and buried—life blooming amid the ghastly emblems of death. And, in the world of religious thought and opinion, while divine truth remains in its essence unchangeably the same, old forms and old definitions are ever giving place to the new. The transition from the old to a new order of things in the progress of religion is not always accomplished without opposition. Age is naturally and increasingly tenacious; and the old religion looks upon the new with suspicion, with jealousy, with fear, with anger. The Jews had resisted the attempts of their own divinely commissioned prophets to rouse the nation to a purer faith and more vigorous religious life; but their fury reached its climax in their blind, unreasonable, and fiendish opposition to Christianity. The text describes the fury of the old religion against the new.

I. **The fury of the Jews is seen in their inhuman treatment of the great leaders of religious thought.**—"Who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us" (ver. 15).

1. *They plotted against the life of the world's Redeemer;* and in spite of insufficient evidence to convict, and the endeavours of the Roman procurator to release, they clamoured for the immediate crucifixion of their innocent Victim, exclaiming in the wild intoxication of malignant passion, "His blood be on us and on our children"—a self-invoked imprecation that fell on them with terrible and desolating vengeance.

2. *The sin of murder already darkly stained their race.*—The best and noblest of their prophets were unoffending victims: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, Zechariah, met with violent deaths. The charge of the proto-martyr Stephen was unanswerable (Acts vii. 52).

3. *The apostles were subjected to similar treatment.*—"And have persecuted us"—have chased and driven us out. They drove them out of Thessalonica, afterwards out of Berœa, and were at that moment engaged in instigating an insurrection to drive the apostle out of Corinth. The spirit of persecution is unchanged. Wherever the attempt is made to raise the Church from the grave of spiritual death and reanimate her creed and ritual with intenser reality and life, it is met with a jealous, angry opposition. What a wretched, short-sighted policy does persecution reveal! It is the idolised weapon of the tyrant and the coward, the sport of the brutal, the sanguinary carnival of demons!

II. **The fury of the Jews was displeasing to God.**—"They please not God" (ver. 15). They fondly imagined they were the favourites of heaven, and that all others were excluded from the divine complacency. They had the words of the law carefully committed to memory, and could quote them with the utmost facility to serve their own purpose. They would support their proud assumption of superiority and exclusiveness by quoting Deut. xiv. 2, wilfully shutting their eyes to the vital difference between the holy intention of Jehovah and their miserably defective realisation of that intention. In their opposition to Christianity they thought they were doing God service; yet all the time they were displeasing to Him. How fatally blinding is sin, goading the soul to the commission of the most horrible crimes under the sacred guise of virtue!

III. **The fury of the Jews was hostile to man.**—1. *Their hostility was directed against the world of mankind.* "Are contrary to all men" (ver. 15). The Jews of that period delighted in hatching all kinds of "sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion." They were the adversaries of all, the despisers of all. Tacitus, the Roman historian, brands them as "the enemies of all men"; and Apion, the Egyptian, according to the admission of Josephus, calls them "atheists and misanthropes—in fact, the most witless and dullest of barbarians."

2. *Their hostility was embittered by a despicable religious jealousy.*—"Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved" (ver. 16). Here the fury of the old religion against the new reached its climax. It is the perfection of

bigotry and cruelty to deny to our fellow-men the only means of salvation. Into what monsters of barbarity will persecution turn men! Pharaoh persisted to such a degree of unreasonableness as to chastise the Hebrews for not accomplishing impossibilities! Julian, the apostate from Christianity, carried his vengeful spirit to his deathbed, and died cursing the Nazarene!

IV. **The fury of the Jews hurried them into irretrievable ruin.**—1. *Their wickedness was wilfully persistent.* "To fill up their sins alway" (ver. 16)—at all times, now as much as ever. So much so, the time is now come when the cup of their iniquity is filled to the brim, and nothing can prevent the consequent punishment. The desire to sin grows with its commission. "Sinners," says St. Gregory, "would live for ever that they might sin for ever"—a powerful argument for the endlessness of future punishment. The desire to sin is endless.

2. *Their punishment was inevitable and complete.*—"For the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost" (ver. 16)—is even now upon them. The process has begun; their fury to destroy others will accelerate their own destruction. Punishment fell upon the wicked, unbelieving, and resisting Jews, and utter destruction upon their national status and religious supremacy (*vide* Josephus, *Wars*, Books v., vi.).

Lessons.—1. *There is a fearful possibility of sinking into a lifeless formality, and blind, infatuate opposition to the good.* 2. *The rage of man against the truth defeats its own ends, and recoils in vengeance on himself.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 15, 16. *The Persecuting Jews—*

I. **Often misled by professed zeal for truth.**

II. **Tortured and murdered the noblest men of their own race.**

III. **Opposed the gospel with violent and unreasoning severity.**

IV. **Have themselves been persecuted by all the nations among whom they sojourned.**

V. **Furnish an unanswerable argument for the truth of Christianity.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 17—20.

The Power of Satan, Great but Restricted.

St. Paul had a profound, unhesitating belief in the reality and personal activity of Satan. An examination of the apostle's own writings and discourses places this beyond doubt. We need refer to but a few passages. Satan is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. ii. 2); "the god of this world, blinding the minds of them which believe not" (2 Cor. iv. 4). To convert to the Christian religion is to bring men "from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts xxvi. 18). To relapse is "to turn aside after Satan" (1 Tim. v. 15). To commit sin is to "give place to the devil" (Eph. iv. 27). If Paul suffered from some grievous bodily ailment that checked him in his evangelical labours, it was "the angel of Satan to buffet him" (2 Cor. xii. 17); and when he was prevented from paying a visit to the struggling Church at Thessalonica, it was "Satan that hindered him." Observe:—

I. **The power of Satan forcing an unwilling separation.**—"But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart" (ver. 17).

1. *The separation was painful, but temporary.*—"Being taken from you"—literally, being *orphaned of you.* This grief was like that of a father bereft of his children, or children of their parents. Their emotions were expressed by Jacob—"If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." They hoped speedily

to return; and, after the lapse of five years, their hope was realised. Satan acted by means of wicked men (Acts xvii. 5-8, 13).

2. *The separation did not lessen their spiritual attachment.*—"In presence, not in heart." Satan may deprive of the opportunity of social intercourse, but not of reciprocal Christian love. Augustine, referring to different kinds of friendship, shows the pre-eminence of the spiritual, where the link is grace and the Spirit of God: "Natural affection want of presence diminisheth; mundane friendship, where profit makes the union, want of profit unlooseth; but spiritual amity nothing dissolves, no, not that which dissolves all others, lack of society."

II. **The power of Satan hindering an earnestly desired visit.**—1. *Opposition intensified their desire to see their converts.* "Endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire" (ver. 17). As lime is inflamed by water, as a stream grows more furious by the obstacles set against it, so genuine affection is increased in fervour by that which opposes it.

2. *The opposition succeeded in baffling repeated attempts to carry out that desire.*—"Wherefore, we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us" (ver. 18). The apostle halted at Berœa on his way to Athens, and probably attempted then to return to Thessalonica, but was thwarted in his design. Though no express reference is made in the history to the agency of Satan, Paul had unmistakable evidence of its operation in many ways. *Satan hindered us*—perhaps by imprisonment, tempests at sea, or by keeping him so fully occupied with incessant conflicts and ever-new tribulations of his own, as to leave him no leisure for carrying out his plan. The verb signifies to cut a trench in the way of a pursuing enemy, so as to hinder his progress.

III. **The power of Satan unable to rob the Christian worker of the joy and reward of success.**—Great as is the power of Satan, it is not omnipotent. The Christian warrior can successfully withstand it (Eph. vi. 11-13); and he is assured that God will bruise Satan under his feet (Rom. xvi. 20).

1. *Success in soul-saving is productive of unutterable joy.*—"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye?" (ver. 19). The merchant rejoices over his gains, the warrior over his victories, the artist over the achievements of genius; but there is no joy so sweet, so exquisite, so abiding, as the successful winner of souls.

2. *The joy of success in soul-saving will be among the highest rewards of the future.*—"In the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (vers. 19, 20). The return of Christ to heaven, after the judgment, is here compared to the solemnity of a triumph, in which the apostle is to appear crowned in token of victory over the false religions of the world, attended by his converts; and because they are the cause of his being thus crowned, they are, by a beautiful figure of speech, called his crown of rejoicing. Special honour is promised to the successful worker (Dan. xii. 3). (1) Joy enhanced by the recognitions in the future life. "Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" If Paul knows his converts in the heavenly world, shall we not know our loved ones who have gone before? (2) By the presence and approbation of the Lord Jesus for whom we have laboured. "In Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Lessons.—1. *The power of Satan works through many agencies; therefore we have need of watchfulness.* 2. *The power of Satan is limited; therefore we need not be discouraged.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 18. *Satanic Hindrances—*

I. Are veiled by subtle and specious pretexts.

II. Work mischief in individuals and in Churches.

III. May succeed in diverting for a time the best intentions of the good.

IV. Should be diligently and prayerfully watched.

V. Are frustrated by a superior power.

Vers. 19, 20. *The Joy of a Minister in his Converts—*

I. As they are living witnesses of the power of the gospel.

II. As they are the crowning reward of his labours.

III. As he shares the joy of Christ in their salvation and final glory.

CHAPTER III.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **When we could no longer forbear.**—This latter word occurs in 1 Cor. xiii. 7 to describe the endurance of love.

Ver. 2. **Fellow-labourer** is omitted from the R.V. text, which reads, "our brother and God's minister in the gospel of Christ." **To establish you.**—To fix firmly; as Christ said to Peter, "*Stablish* thy brethren."

Ver. 3. **That no man should be moved.**—The word seems to imply "moved to softness," as Professor Jowett intimates. It is used especially of the motion of a dog's tail as it fawns on its master. So the word passes over to the mental sphere (compare on St. James's figure, i. 6). "That no man should amidst his calamities be allured by the flattering hope of a more pleasant life to abandon his duty" (*Tittmann*).

Ver. 4. **We should suffer tribulation.**—In the verse previous the noun from the same root as the one here translated "suffer tribulation" is given as "afflictions." "The actual persecution of the Roman government was slight, but what may be termed social persecution and the illegal violence employed towards the first disciples unceasing" (*Jowett*).

Ver. 5. **When I could no longer forbear . . . sent to know.**—The whole verse shows the tension of the apostle's mind.

Ver. 6. **And brought us good tidings.**—R.V. "glad tidings." "The one word for 'brought-glad-tidings' everywhere else in New Testament signifies *the* glad tidings. . . . Hence the peculiar force of the word here. . . . It was a gospel sent to *him* in return for his gospel brought to them" (*Findlay*). **Ye have good remembrance of us.**—Kindly remembrance. The tempter had not been able to turn to gall the sweet thoughts of grateful appreciation of the apostle's work.

Ver. 8. **For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.**—The man who later could say, "For to me to live is Christ," prepares us for that saying by this. Life to him is desirable only as others benefit by it.

Ver. 9. **For what thanks can we render to God again.**—In the R.V. "again" is joined with "render," representing the one word of St. Paul. The same verb is found twice in Luke xiv. 14 as "recompense." The apostle feels what a poor requital any thanksgiving must be for the mercy of the good news from Thessalonica (see 2 Thess. i. 6).

Ver. 11. **Direct our way unto you.**—Acts xvi. 6, 7 should be read. Satan might hinder (ii. 18); if God "makes straight" the way, progress will be easy.

Ver. 12. **The Lord make you abound in love.**—The Lord may here be the Holy Spirit, as the three persons of the Trinity will be appealed to (cf. ver. 13, as in 2 Thess. iii. 5). So the Holy Ghost is called the Lord (2 Cor. iii. 17). Love is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22), and His office is to establish in holiness (ver. 13; 1 Pet. i. 2) (*Faussett*).

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

A Difficult and Important Mission.

Paul had been compelled to leave Thessalonica in consequence of the malignant opposition of the Jews. They thirsted for his life, and it would still be dangerous for him to visit the city. But Timothy might venture where it would be perilous for the apostle to appear. While the wrath of the Jews raged against the gospel as a whole, it culminated in its fury around the head of Paul, the ringleader and champion of the movement. Fearing that his absence might be misconstrued, and anxious to strengthen the faith of the infant Church in the midst of trial, the apostle determines to send a trusted messenger. It is a significant testimony to the sound judgment and prudence of Timothy, that he is selected for this difficult and important mission.

I. **This mission was the suggestion of an uncontrollable anxiety.**—"Wherefore, when we could no longer forbear" (ver. 1). This anxiety sprang from the intensity of the apostle's love. It is a striking feature of genuine, Christian love that, while it bears with uncomplaining patience any amount of external suffering, it is restless with a holy impatience of delay in doing good to those it embraces. The devoted mother can endure anything but restraint in her desire to promote the best welfare of her child. David was indifferent to the exposure and dangers of his wilderness-life; but his soul panted after God with all the raging thirst of the hart in autumn for the cooling water-brook.

II. **This mission involved great personal inconvenience.**—"We thought it good to be left at Athens alone" (ver. 1). The unselfishness of true love ever prefers another's good to its own. Timothy had travelled so constantly with Paul, and had been so great a comfort to him in his captivities and trials, that his absence was a keenly felt loss. Specially was his sympathy and co-operation needed when the great Gentile missionary entered the region

> "Where on the Ægean shore a city stood,
> Built nobly, pure the air and light the soil,
> Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts
> And eloquence."—*Milton.*

"*At Athens alone.*" What a sublime historical picture is portrayed in these words! Christianity embodied in a single, lonely man, standing in the midst of the populous metropolis of pagan culture and idolatry! Yet the power sustained in that solitary man broke up and scattered the huge fabric of heathenism. "Solitude is one of the highest enjoyments of which our nature is susceptible. Solitude is also, when too long continued, capable of being made the most severe, indescribable, unendurable, source of anguish" (*Deloraine*).

III. **This mission was entrusted to a thoroughly qualified messenger.**—The high character of Timothy and the relations existing between the two preachers are brought out in the epithets applied to him. "Timothy *our brother*" (ver. 2). In other places Paul calls him his "own son in the faith," his "dearly beloved son"; but in speaking of him to the Churches he recognises him on the equal footing of a *brother*. He was also a *minister of God*, solemnly set apart to this service by the voice of prophecy, and by the consecrating hands of the presbytery, and of Paul himself. And finally he was Paul's *fellow-labourer in the gospel of Christ*, not only as all God's ministers are fellow-labourers, working the work of the same Lord, but also on the ground of that special intimacy of personal intercourse and co-operation, to which he was from the first admitted by the apostle (*Lillie*). Thus Timothy was thoroughly qualified—(1) *to carry out the apostle's wish concerning the Thessalonians, and* (2) *to sympathise with the Church's peculiar difficulties and trials.* He was more than a mere courier. He was faithful to Paul's instructions, and valuable to the Church in himself.

IV. **This mission was charged with a work of high importance and necessity.**—"To establish you, and to comfort you, concerning your faith" (ver. 2).

1. *To establish*—to comfort, or set fast their faith by a fresh, authoritative manifestation of the gospel truth and its divine evidences; and this would be done by private conversation and public ministration.

2. *To comfort.*—The word means also, and especially here, to *exhort*, though doubtless comfort would be mingled with the exhortation. The Thessalonians were exposed to the storm of persecution that was everywhere raging against the gospel and its adherents, and they were exhorted to steadfastness, "that no man should be moved by these afflictions." Paul and Barnabas had a similar mission to the Churches in Lesser Asia (Acts xiv. 22). There are none so strong in faith but need confirmation, none so courageous but need comfort.

Lessons.—1. *The establishment of believers is ever a subject of anxiety to the true minister.* 2. *The desire to promote the highest welfare of the Church should ever be paramount.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSE.

Ver. 1. "At Athens alone" (cf. Acts xvii. 16, 17). *The Solitude of a Great City—*

I. **Affords a painful opportunity to reflect on its moral condition.**—"He saw the city wholly given to idolatry."

II. **Awakens profound concern in a great soul.**—"His spirit was stirred in him."

III. **Rouses to immediate action in promoting the welfare of the citizens.**—"Therefore disputed he in the synagogue and in the market daily."

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

The Perils of Suffering.

A storm among the Highlands of Scotland often effects great and rapid changes. The huge mountain that slumbers harmlessly in the sunshine, with such calm and sullen majesty, is transformed by the tempest into a monster of fury. Its sides are suddenly sheeted with waterfalls, and the ferocious torrents work devastation among the glens and straths that lie in their impetuous course. The trees and shrubs that are but slightly rooted are swept away, and only the firmly grounded survive. So it is when the storm of persecution breaks upon the gospel and its adherents. The new converts, the roots of whose faith have not penetrated so deeply into the soil of truth, are in danger of being disturbed and carried away. Their peril is matter of anxiety to the Christian worker. Hence the apostle sends Timothy, and writes this epistle to the Thessalonians, to confirm and establish them in the faith. He shows:—

1. **That suffering is the inevitable lot of God's people.**—1. *That suffering is a divine ordinance.* "For ye yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto" (ver. 3). A strange way, one would think, of reconciling people to affliction, by telling them that they have nothing else to expect. It is a grand proof of the triumph of the gospel over the rebellious human heart that it prescribes such conditions and reconciles men to the acceptance of them; and it does so both by the grace which it imparts for the present and by the glorious hope it holds out for the future. It is laid down as a law of Christian progress "that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God." The very purity of the Church, imperfect as it is, coming into contact with the sin and misery prevalent in the world, produces suffering. "Because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." It is enough for

us to know that our trials do not happen without the knowledge and consent and purpose and control of God, and that their extent and duration are regulated by His infinite, fatherly wisdom and love. The divine appointment of suffering is designed for our highest discipline and culture—withdrawing our affections from the temporal and centring them on eternal realities; exposing our hypocrisies and cleansing the moral corruptions that have entered into our lives, like filth on standing waters, and strengthening us to do the right, undismayed by the bitterest afflictions. The greatest suffering often brings us into the neighbourhood of the greatest blessing. "Gold is cleaner after it has been put into the fire: be thou gold, and the fiery persecution shall not hurt thee."

2. *That suffering was the subject of frequent apostolic warning.*—"For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation" (ver. 4). It is intimated here that it was not so much one single statement on some particular occasion as it was the constant and habitual tenor of the apostle's teaching that suffering was to be expected. Paul himself was an illustrious example of heroic fortitude in suffering for Christ's sake. "The Holy Ghost," said he, "witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and affliction abide me" (Acts xx. 23). It is both wise and kind to forewarn God's people of coming afflictions, that they be not overtaken unexpectedly and unprepared. The predictions of the apostle were verified: "*Even as it came to pass, and ye know.*" Their first acquaintance with the gospel was in the midst of persecution and trial. The violent opposition continued, but the warnings and exhortations of the apostle were not in vain (2 Thess. i. 4).

3. *That the suffering of God's people is a cause of ministerial anxiety.*—"For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith" (ver. 5). It has been pithily said, "Calamity is man's true touchstone." The strongest have then become a prey to the malice and subtlety of Satan. The faithful minister, knowing the perils of suffering and the awful consequences of apostasy, is anxiously concerned about the faith of his converts. "There are three modes of bearing the ills of life—by indifference, which is the most common; by philosophy, which is the most ostentatious; and by religion, which is the most effectual" (*Colton*).

II. **That suffering exposes God's people to the disturbing forces of Satanic temptations.**—"Lest by some means the tempter have tempted you" (ver. 5).

1. *A suggestive designation of Satan.*—"The tempter." What unspeakable vileness, ruin, misery, and terror are suggested by that name! All human woe may be traced directly up to him. The greatest champions of Christendom, such as Paul and Luther, had the most vivid sense of the personality, nearness, and unceasing counter-working of this great adversary of God and man. There is need of sleepless vigilance and prayer.

2. *The versatility of Satanic temptations.*—"Lest by some means." He may descend suddenly, clothed with terror and burning with wrath, to surprise and terrify into sin. More frequently he appears in the seductive and more dangerous garb of an angel of light, the deceptive phantom of what he once was. Infinite are his methods; his aim is one—to suggest doubts and impious references as to God's providential dealings of severity, and to produce apostasy from the faith.

III. **That the temptations of a suffering state imperil the work of God's servants.**—"And our labour be in vain" (ver. 5). *In vain* as regards the great end of their salvation; they would lapse into their former heathenish state, and by apostasy lose their heavenly reward; and *in vain* as regards the joy which the apostle anticipated from their ultimate salvation. It is true no work done for God is absolutely in vain; the worker shall receive his just reward; but it may be in vain with regard to the object to which his best efforts have been directed. It is bitterly disappointing to see the work that has cost so much, utterly

frustrated by a momentary temptation of the wicked one. How different might have been the moral history of thousands if they had not yielded to the first fiery trial!

"Of all the sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these—*it might have been.*"

IV. **That God's people may triumph over the greatest suffering.**—"That no man should be moved [drawn away by flattery or shaken] by these afflictions" (ver. 3). While piety is tried, it is also strengthened by suffering. The watchful and faithful soul may use his troubles as aids to a richer experience and a firmer consolidation of Christian character. "Thus God schooleth and nurtureth His people, that so, through many tribulations, they may enter into their rest. Frankincense, when it is put into the fire, giveth the greater perfume; spice, if it be pounded, smelleth the sweeter; the earth, when it is torn up by the plough, becometh more fruitful; the seed in the ground, after frost and snow and winter storms, springeth up the ranker; the nigher the vine is pruned to the stock, the greater grape it yieldeth; the grape, when it is most pressed and beaten, maketh the sweetest wine; fine gold is the better when it is cast into the fire; rough stones, with hewing, are squared and made fit for the building; cloth is rent and cut that it may make a garment; linen that is thrown into the tub, washed, and beaten, is the fairer" (*Jewell*).

Lessons.—1. *To live a godly life involves suffering.* 2. *A period of suffering is ever attended with powerful temptations.* 3. *The grace of God is sufficient to sustain and deliver His people amid the perils of acutest suffering.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 3-5. *The Necessity and the Perils of Affliction.*

I. **That afflictions are disturbing and distressing to the children of God.**

II. **That afflictions are appointed by God for His people's good.**

III. **That Christians are forewarned to expect affliction.**

IV. **That Satan uses affliction as a means of temptation.**

V. **That the faithful minister must labour and watch in order to secure the steadfastness of believers under his care.**—Herbert, the saintly poet of the seventeeth century, exhorts the preacher to make the consolations of the gospel his main theme:

"Oh, let him speak of comfort, 'tis
Most wanted in this vale of tears."

—*P. Mearns.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 6.

News that gladdens.

With what anxiety the father entrusts his son with a commission to visit an estate in a distant land, and to investigate its affairs, which are threatened for the time being with impending dangers. He is in suspense until he receives intelligence of the safe arrival of his loved messenger, and that there is no reason for apprehension concerning the estate itself. But when that son returns in person and assures him that everything is prosperous and hopeful, the father's satisfaction is complete. "As cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." Such, in a higher sense, was the experience of Paul when he despatched Timothy to inquire into the condition of the suffering Thessalonian Church, and when he brought back the cheering report as to the fidelity and affection of its persecuted members.

I. **The apostle was gladdened with good tidings of faith maintained.**—"Timothy came from you to us, and brought us good tidings of your faith."

1. *Their faith in the great truths of the gospel was maintained.*—The revelation of divine truth is the basis of faith. This truth as it affected their salvation had been clearly, earnestly, and successfully declared to them by the apostle and his companions. They comprehended its meaning, felt its force, embraced it in their understanding and heart, and were transformed by its agency. Amid the shock of persecution, and the insidious whisperings of false teachers, they held fast to "the form of sound words" they had joyfully received.

2. *Their faith as a principle of active spiritual life was maintained.*—True faith is not simply a belief, but a life; not merely an assent of the mind to a grand truth or a group of correlated truths, but the impartation to the soul of a spiritual force which starts it on a new career. It forms a new era in the experience and history of the soul. It unites us to the living God, and expands to our view, however dimly, the vast outline of the life of God as the pattern of our own. Their faith, as the realisation of a life springing from God and leading to God, was in sound and vigorous operation.

II. **The apostle was gladdened with good tidings of love manifested.**—"Brought us good tidings of your charity." Love is the legitimate fruit of a genuine faith, both in its inward experience and outward manifestation. Faith and love are indissolubly combined. "And this is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1 John iii. 23). The first exercise of love is towards God; and then, in ever widening and intensified outflow, towards all whom God loves. Such love is *impartial* and *universal*—manifested towards all in whom we discern the image of God, whatever their country, colour, rank, sect, or condition. Where faith and love reign there is a living, healthy, and prosperous Church.

III. **The apostle was gladdened with good tidings of continued personal regard.**—1. *The apostle was fondly remembered.* "And that ye have good remembrance of us always." There are some scenes of nature which, beheld but for a moment, never fade from the memory; there are some faces we can never forget; and there are some individuals, the influence of whose character remains with us as a charm and inspiration through life. The Thessalonians had good reason to remember Paul. He was the first to proclaim to them the good news of salvation; and how great was their privilege to hear the gospel from the lips of such a preacher! He counselled them in their difficulties, and sympathised with them in their sufferings. The minister who first led us to the cross will ever have the pre-eminence in our affection and the choicest spot in our memory. A high appreciation of the Christian minister is one of the evidences of possessing genuine faith and love.

2. *They were as solicitous as the apostle for a renewal of Christian fellowship.*—"Desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you." There is no bond at once so tender and so strong as that existing between the preacher and his converts. He must needs love the souls he has been instrumental in saving and who are his glory and his joy. The intercourse between such is of the purest and highest kind. Never was there a more loving heart than that of the apostle Paul. The Thessalonians warmly reciprocated that love, and longed to renew the fellowship by which they had so richly profited.

Lessons.—1. *That Church has the best reputation where faith is maintained and love manifested.* 2. *The Christian minister is cheered by the affection and stability of his converts.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7—10.

Steadfastness of Believers a Source of True Ministerial Satisfaction.

The scholar finds his happiness in intellectual exercises and accumulating stores of knowledge; the politician in the excitement of debate and the triumph of great principles; the scientist in testing and harmonising the laws of nature; the merchant in his gains; and the minister of God's word in the increase of converts to the truth, and in their consistency, fidelity, and perseverance in the practice of godliness. The truly Christian heart rejoices in the success of the gospel in any part of the world, but more particularly in the locality where personal labour has been expended. The effect upon Paul of the good tidings from Timothy, concerning the steadfastness of the believers in Thessalonica, is described in these verses. Observe :—

I. **Their steadfastness was a source of genuine comfort.**—1. *The apostle was comforted in the midst of intense personal suffering.* "Therefore, brethren, we were comforted in all our affliction and distress" (ver. 7). Paul was in Corinth when he received Timothy's report. In that city the customary opposition of the Jews rose to an unwonted pitch of malignity, and even blasphemy, so much so that the apostle resolved to abandon them to their fate—"He shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles" (Acts xviii. 6). So great was his anguish on behalf of his own countrymen, and so manifold his cares, privations, and perils, that the Lord thought it needful to encourage him with a vision, saying, "Be not afraid: I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee" (*Ibid.*, 9, 10). The bitterness of his afflictions at this time was sweetened by hearing of the constancy of his Thessalonian converts. It revived, refreshed, and strengthened him. The faithlessness and disobedience of the people are a grief to the true minister now; but at last the horror will be theirs.

2. *The apostle was comforted concerning their faith.*—"We were comforted over you, by your faith" (ver. 7). Timothy had been commissioned to inquire into the state of their faith, and his report was eminently satisfactory. He spoke not only of their faith as the primary root of the Christian life, the basis of all stability and fruitfulness, but of its active outgoings in love to God and in affectionate remembrance of the apostle. The Church is in danger and a cause of deep anxiety when its faith wavers.

II. **Their steadfastness intensified the pleasure of living.**—"For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord" (ver. 8). The apostle was perhaps more than usually despondent when Timothy arrived. The good news thrilled his soul with new life. *For now*, whatever else befall—*now*, in the face of the Jewish fury and Gentile scorn—*now*, amid infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses, and deaths oft—*now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.* The relation of the minister to his people is so close and vital that they have it in their power to make his life happy or supremely miserable. There is a method of destroying life without its becoming utterly extinct. Ezekiel speaks of the false prophets whose lies made the hearts of the righteous sad; and we read of Elijah, under the juniper tree, sighing for death because of the idolatry and wickedness of Judah. To lessen the cheerful flow of life, and depress the spirits of the man of God, is a species of murder; to starve him into submission by studied neglect and privation is diabolical. The ministerial life and energy of even an apostle depended on the sympathy, faith, and steadfastness of the brethren (3 John v. 4).

III. **Their steadfastness was productive of grateful joy.**—1. *This joy was copious and sincere.*—"For the joy wherewith we joy before our God" (ver. 9). The transitions of the emotions are rapid. From the midst of the apostle's grief a

fountain of joy breaks forth. This joy filled his soul even in the secret presence of God. It was a pure, sincere, undissembled, overflowing joy, such as God could approve.

2. *This joy arose from a disinterested love.*—"For your sakes." True love gives us an interest in the safety and happiness of others. He who possesses this never lacks joy; if it flows not on his own behalf, it does on behalf of others. Bernard has said: "Of all the motions and affections of the soul, love is the only one we may reciprocate with God: to re-love Him is our happiness; woe if we answer Him not in some measure of re-loving affection."

3. *This joy was expressed in fervent thanksgiving.*—"What thanks can we render to God again for you?" (ver. 9). His gratitude was so great that he knew not how to give it adequate expression. The grateful heart prizes blessings that may seem to others of small value. He rendered thanks to God, the author and preserver of their faith. The heartiest thanksgiving seems cold and utterly insufficient when compared with the mercies of God.

IV. **Their steadfastness excited an earnest longing for the opportunity of imparting additional good.**—1. *The apostle assiduously prayed for the opportunity of a personal interview.* "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face" (ver. 10). The longer the absence, the more eagerly he desired to see them. The good tidings of their constancy increased the desire. A love like his could be satisfied only with personal spiritual intercourse. It was not enough simply to write. Voice and manner have a pre-eminent charm in the interchange of mind with mind. Reading, praying, and all other endeavours will be unavailing if we despise prophesying—the oral declaration of the truth.

2. *The apostle sought this interview to supply what was deficient in their faith.*—"And might perfect that which was lacking in your faith" (ver. 10). None so perfect in faith as not to be susceptible of improvement. Faith is based on knowledge; and as knowledge, especially in the things of God, is capable of indefinite extension, so faith may be continually increased—broadening and deepening its foundation and consolidating its structure. The less distinctly the great subjects of faith are understood, the more defective is faith; the more explicit, the more perfect. They most vaunt of faith who have least experience in its practice. "Empty vessels sound the loudest." We have all need to cry, "*Lord, increase our faith.*"

Lessons.—1. *The true minister cannot be indifferent to the spiritual state of his people.* 2. *The fidelity and perseverance of believers is an inspiration and unspeakable joy to the anxious worker.* 3. *Faith and practice powerfully react upon each other.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 7-10. *Glad Tidings of Christian Steadfastness—*

I. **Produce comfort of mind** (ver. 7).

II. **Make life more enjoyable** (ver. 8).

III. **Are the occasion of thankful joy before the Lord** (ver. 9).

IV. **Excite to assiduous and earnest prayer** (ver. 10).

Vers. 9, 10. *Religious Joy—*

I. **Is occasioned by the religious progress of others.**

II. **Is mingled with ingenuous gratitude.**

III. **Is enjoyed as in the presence of God.**

IV. **Is accompanied with fervent prayer.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 11—13.

A Comprehensive Apostolic Prayer.

The prayers of the apostle Paul are among his sublimest utterances. The frequency with which they occur in his writings indicates the habitual devoutness of his mind. In both the epistles to the Thessalonians nearly every chapter is distinguished and sealed by a fervent outbreathing of his soul to God. In these verses he expresses, in the most comprehensive and suggestive terms, his dearest wishes for the welfare of the Church.

I. **This prayer recognises the essential oneness of the Father and the Son.**—1. *Christ is invoked equally with the Father.* "Now God Himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 11). The word "Himself" stands foremost in the sentence and refers to both persons, as if the writer said, "May our God and Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, *Himself* direct our way unto you." It should be also noted that the verb "direct," belonging to both persons, is in the singular number. This fact was urged as an important point by Athanasius in the great Arian controversy in the fourth century. As the Son partakes equally with the Father in the honour of invocation, so also in excellency of nature. Divine properties are also ascribed to the Son in overruling by His providence the affairs of men. "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."

2. *It is the privilege of the believer to realise a personal interest in the Father and in the Son.*—By an act of appropriating faith we can say, God *our* Father and *our* Lord Jesus Christ. Similiar phrases occur no less than twenty-six times in these two epistles. Blessed confidence! What a wealth of tenderness, of comfort, of satisfying assurance, and of joyous triumph is involved in the earnest, trustful cry of the soul—*My* God! *my* Saviour!

II. **This is a prayer for providential guidance in securing a much desired interview.**—"Direct our way unto you" (ver. 11). Hitherto the way to Thessalonica had been insuperably blocked up. The brethren there were as eager to welcome Paul as he was to be present with them; but Satan had hindered by interposing many obstacles. Nevertheless, let God give the signal and all impediments from men or devils would vanish. The road would at once become straight and plain. God should be recognised in the simplest affairs of life. "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps;" and only those journeys are prosperous wherein God is pilot. There are crises in life when everything depends on being guided in the right way—*e.g.* in selecting a school or college, entering on the religious life, commencing business, contemplating marriage, or in change of residence. In these and all other matters acknowledge God, and He shall direct thy paths. Our prayer for guidance must ever be in submission to the divine will. The apostle's prayer was not answered immediately; five years elapsed before he again visited Macedonia. That path is safest and best in which God's finger points. Let His call be our loadstar; His hand the cloud, to move or pause as He directs.

III. **This is a prayer for the bestowal of an increased measure of the highest Christian affection.**—1. *Christian love is progressive and mutual.* "And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another" (ver. 12). The apostle had before commended their labour of love, and Timothy had brought good tidings of their continued love. Now he prays they may increase and excel more and more. Love is the indispensable badge of the genuine Christian. He cannot have too much of it—the more the better. It grows with all other graces, and causes them to grow. There is no limit to its expansion but our finiteness. But love must be mutual in its exercise—"one toward another." "For this is the message," says St. John, "that ye heard from the beginning,

that ye should love one another;" and, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another," urges St. Peter, "with a pure heart fervently."

2. *Christian love is unselfish.*—"And toward all men." The old Levitical law declared, "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And the New Testament reiterates the truth, that charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned is the fulfilling of the royal law.

3. *Here we have Christian love practically exemplified.*—"Even as we do towards you." Paul and his co-labourers had given unmistakable evidence of their sincere love for the Thessalonian converts in their self-denying labours, uncomplaining sufferings, and unceasing anxiety on their behalf (ii. 8, 9, 13, iii. 3-5). Love is the soul of self-sacrifice, prompts to labour, braves all suffering, and persists in doing good to others, even to those who least appreciate and most violently oppose the best endeavours. Ministers should exemplify in their own lives what they prescribe to others.

IV. **This is a prayer for confirmation in a state of unblamable personal purity.**—1. *There is no stability in Christian graces apart from love.* "To the end he may establish your hearts" (ver. 13). If it were possible to possess every other grace but love, it would be like a varied summer landscape, very beautiful but transient, having in it no element of permanency. Above all other graces we are exhorted to "put on charity which is the bond of perfectness"—a girdle which adorns and binds together all the rest. Love is the fulfilling of the law, the infallible test and evidence of stability.

2. *Unblamable holiness is the legitimate and necessary outcome of love.*—"To the end He may stablish your hearts in holiness" (ver. 13). The apostle prays for an increase of love *in order to* the attainment of a higher personal purity. All defects in obedience issue from a defect in love. Our love of God makes us solicitous to know and obey Him and fearful to offend Him. Our love of man makes us careful to preserve his honour, life, and possessions, and in no way to impair his happiness. The whole of the law is love. There is no duty to God or man but love inclines unto, and no sin from which it does not restrain. To be unblamable in holiness, store the soul with love. When love fails, obedience and all holy duties fail.

3. *Holiness screens the soul from divine censure at the second advent of Christ.*—"Unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (ver. 13). Christ will come in glorious pomp attended by His holy ones—saints and angels. He who remains steadfast in holiness shall be held blameless then. Our outer *life* may be censured by men; but if God, even our Father, who stablishes our *hearts* in holiness, absolves and approves, it will be enough. That holiness alone is genuine which will bear the searching scrutiny of Omniscience.

Lessons.—1. *Recognise God in every event of life.* 2. *To attain the highest degree of personal purity pray for an increase of love.* 3. *Act in all things so as to secure the divine approval.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 12, 13. *A Prayer for Growth in Personal Piety*—

I. **Acknowledges and invokes the divine source of all spiritual good.**—"The Lord make you."

II. **Growth in piety is growth in Christian love.**—"Increase and abound in love."

III. **Growth in piety is the establishment of the soul in unblamable holiness.**—"To the end He may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness."

IV. **Growth in piety is essential to gain the approval of God at the second advent of Christ.**—"Before God, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

Ver. 13. *The Coming of Christ*—
I. **Will be an imposing spectacle.**
II. **Should be ardently longed for.**
III. **Demands on our part diligent moral preparedness.**

CHAPTER IV.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **And to please God, so ye would abound more and more.**—R.V. inserts "even as ye do walk after God."

Ver. 2. **What commandments.**—R.V. "charge"; margin, "charges." "The Greek word signifies an announcement, then a command or advice publicly delivered" (*Findlay*).

Ver. 3. **Your sanctification, etc.**—"The reception of Christianity never delivers, as with the stroke of a magician, from the wickedness and lusts of the heathen world which have become habitual; rather a long and constant fight is necessary for vanquishing them" (*Huther*). The sanctification here is first negative—abstinence.

Ver. 4. **How to possess his vessel.**—R.V. "to possess himself of his own vessel." With the long list of names in view of those who interpret "vessel" as meaning "body," it is almost daring to hint at another meaning. The list, however, is strong of those who regard the expression as a figurative designation for a wife, and 1 Pet. iii. 7 decides us.

Ver. 5. **Not in the lust of concupiscence.**—R.V. "not in the passion of lust." "The word passion signifies not so much a violent feeling as an overpowering feeling, one to which a man so yields himself that he is borne along by evil as if he were its passive instrument; he has lost the dignity of self-rule, and is the slave of his lower appetites" (*Findlay*).

Ver. 6. **That no man go beyond and defraud.**—R.V. "transgress, and wrong." "More exactly, that none overreach and take advantage of his brother in the matter. 'The matter' of the last two verses. . . . The apostle sets the wrong in the strongest light: it is to cheat one's brother, and that in what touches most nearly the sanctities of life" (*Ibid.*). **The Lord is the avenger.**—The heathen deities, so far as they were anything, were oftener patterns than avengers of such things, and they who made them were only too like them.

Ver. 8. **He therefore that despiseth.**—Margin and R.V. "rejecteth." He who pushes aside sanctification in his preference for uncleanness will have to reckon with God Himself.

Ver. 9. **Ye have no need that one write to you.**—St. Paul admits the brotherly love amongst them. It was adroit on his part, therefore, to make uncleanness an offence against brotherly love. **Taught of God.**—Is an expression only found here in the New Testament. We are reminded of Isa. xxviii. 26. The mother-wit of the farmer who had no "school of agriculture" is traced by the prophet to God; he is God-taught to distinguish his methods. So these Thessalonians took to brotherly love naturally, as we say.

Ver. 10. **We beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more.**—Brotherly love is a good thing, of which St. Paul evidently thought too much could not be had.

Ver. 11. **Study to be quiet.**—R.V. margin, "Go: be ambitious." "An example of St. Paul's characteristic irony: the contrast between ambition and quiet, giving a sharper point to his exhortation, as though he said, 'Make it your ambition to have no ambition!'" (*Ibid.*). **To do your own business.**—To be occupied with your own affairs.

Ver. 12. **That ye may walk honestly**—The adverb here is used to match the verb—to walk with a dignified and gentlemanly bearing. St. Paul's ideas of gentlemanliness—"working with the hands"—would not suit the youth of gentlemanly habits who wants to be adopted where he will have nothing to do. **And may have need of nothing.**—What a nobly independent soul! What a splendid text these verses would make for some plain words to Christians who indulge in sharp practices, or waste until they have to throw themselves on any one who will support them!

Ver. 13. **Them which are asleep.**—The R.V. reading changes the perfect participle ("them who have fallen asleep and continue to sleep") unto the present, "them that fall asleep," as they drop off one after another. See on the expression our Lord's beautiful words, Luke viii. 52; John xi. 11 f.

Ver. 15. **We which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord.**—"We must recognise that Paul here includes himself, along with the Thessalonians, among those who will be alive at the advent of Christ. Certainly this can only have been a hope, only a subjective expectation on the part of the apostle" (*Huther*). **Shall not prevent.**—The meaning of "prevent" is "to go before." But the connotation came to have more prominence than the meaning, so it came to signify to stop (by standing in the way). R.V. gives, "shall not precede." It is the same word as in ii. 16 (in another tense). The apostle says, "We shall not arrive before them.'

Ver. 16. **With a shout.**—Like the ring of command heard over the noise of battle. "We must not look for literal exactness where things are depicted beyond the reach of sense" (*Findlay*). **With the trump of God.**—The trumpet here, like that in 1 Cor. xv. 52, is the military trumpet.

Ver. 17. **Shall be caught up.**—The idea conveyed by the word is that of sudden or violent seizure, as when the fiery messengers carried off the prophet Elijah, or as when St. Paul was "caught up" to the third heaven.

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

Earnest Exhortations to a Higher Sanctity.

Purity is the perfection of the Christian character. It is the brightest jewel in the cluster of saintly excellencies, and that which gives a lustre to the whole. It is not so much the addition of a separate and distinct grace as it is the beauteous and harmonious development of all the graces in the most perfect form. As Flavel has said: "What the heart is to the body, that the soul is to the man; and what health is to the heart, holiness is to the soul." Purity is the sound, healthy condition of the soul and its vigorous growth towards God. In the concluding prayer of the preceding chapter the apostle indicates that God will, through His Spirit, fill the Thessalonians with love—the great distinctive feature of a genuine and higher sanctity. He now urges upon them the necessity of earnest and persistent endeavours after its attainment. Human agency is not annihilated, but stimulated by the divine. Observe:—

I. **That a higher sanctity consists in living under a sense of the divine approval.**—1. *Religion is a life.* "How ye ought to walk" (ver. 1). A walk implies motion, progression, continual approach to a definite goal. Religion is not an ornament to wear, a luxury to enjoy, a ceremony to observe, but a *life.* It penetrates every part of our nature, throbs in every pulse, shares every joy and sorrow, and fashions every lineament of character. We make sad mistakes; but there is goodness hived, like wild honey, in strange nooks and corners of the world.

2. *Religion is a life modelled after the worthiest examples.*—"As ye have received of us how ye ought to walk" (ver. 1). The Thessalonians not only received the wisest counsels from their teachers, but they witnessed their holy and consistent lives; and their attention was constantly directed to the all-perfect example—Christ Jesus. It is the tendency of all life to shape itself after the character of its strongest inward force. The love of God is the mightiest power in the life of the believer; and the outer manifestation of that life is moulded according to the sublime pattern of the inner divine ideal.

3. *Religion is a life which finds its chief joy in the divine approval.*—"And to please God" (ver. 1). It is, possible, then, so to live as to please God. What a powerful incentive to a holy life is the thought, the Lord taketh pleasure in His people! We can rise no higher in moral excellence than to be acceptable to God. To enjoy the sense of His approval fills the cup of happiness to the brim. In vain the world frowns or demons rage, if God smiles. The learned and pious Donne, when taking solemn farewell of his friends on his deathbed, said: "I count all that part of my life lost which I spent not in communion with God or in doing good."

4. *Religion is a life capable of vast expansion.*—"So, ye would abound more and more" (ver. 1). *Life* in its healthiest and intensest form is *happiness.* As we advance in the religious life our happiness increases. "All the while," says Fuller, "thou livest ill, thou hast the trouble, distraction, and inconveniences of life, but not the sweets and true use of it." God has made every provision for our increase in holiness; we are exhorted to it, and most really promote our highest good and the divine glory in attaining it. There is no limit in our elevation to a higher sanctity but our faith.

II. **That the necessity of a higher sanctity is enforced by divine authority.**—"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (ver. 3).

1. *A higher sanctity involves a conformity to the divine nature.*—God is holy, and the loftiest aim of the believer is to be like Him. There is to be not only an abstinence from all that is impure, but a positive experience of its opposite—purity. By faith we participate in the divine nature, and possess qualities analogous to those which constitute the divine perfections—mercy, truth, justice, holiness. The grand purpose of redemption is to bring man into holiest fellowship with God.

2. *A higher sanctity is in harmony with the divine will.*—"For this the will of God, even your sanctification." Not only the attitude and tendency of the soul, but all its active outgoings must be holy. Such is the will of God. What he proscribes must be carefully avoided; what He prescribes must be cheerfully and faithfully done in the manner He prescribes it. His will is here emphatically expressed; it is supported by abundant promises of help; and it is declared that without holiness no man shall see the Lord. The will of God is at once the highest reason, the strongest motive, and the final authority.

3. *The divine will regarding a higher sanctity is enforced by duly authorised messengers and well-understood precepts.*—"For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus" (ver. 2). The divine will is expressed in definite commandments. The apostle did not assume authority in any dictatorial spirit. He delivered unto others, and powerfully enforced what he had received "by the Lord Jesus." He taught them to observe all things whatsoever the Lord had commanded—*all* those things, only those, and no others. These precepts were well known, "For ye know what commandments we gave you." Obedience should ever be in proportion to knowledge. Knowledge and practice are mutually helpful to each other. Knowledge, the mother of practice; practice, the nurse of knowledge. To know and not to do is to incur the heaviest condemnation. A certain Stoic, speaking of God, said: "What God wills, I will; what God wills not, I will not; if He will that I live, I will live; if it be His pleasure that I die, I will die." Ah! how should the will of Christians stoop and lie down at the foot of God's will! "Not my will, but Thine be done."

III. **That the possession of a higher sanctity is repeatedly urged by earnest exhortations.**—"Furthermore then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you" (ver. 1). Doctrine without exhortation makes men all brain, no heart; exhortation without doctrine makes the heart full, leaves the brain empty. Both together make a man. The apostle laboured in both, and it is difficult to say in which of the two he displayed most earnestness. In addition to all he had urged before, he *beseeches* and *exhorts* the Thessalonians to press onward to higher attainments; in which we have a fine example of the combination of a tender, brotherly entreaty, with the solemn authority of a divinely commissioned ambassador. Some people, says a certain writer, are as thorns; handle them roughly and they pierce you; others as nettles—rough handling is best for your safety. A minister's task is an endless one. Has he planted knowledge?—practice must be urged. Is the practice satisfactory?—perseverance must be pressed. Do

they continue in well-doing?—they must be stimulated to further progress. The end of one task is the beginning of another.

Lessons.—*The believer is called to the attainment of a higher sanctity*—1. *By the voice of God.* 2. *By the voice of His faithful ministers.* 3. *And by the aspirations of the life divinely planted within him.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 3. *Uncleanness Inconsistent with a Profession of the Gospel.*

I. Our sanctification is the will of God because He is the avenger of all such as do things contrary to that purity which He enjoins.

II. Because God has called us, not to uncleanness, but to holiness.

III. Because God has given unto us His Holy Spirit.—The Spirit is called the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Holiness, not only because He is essentially and perfectly holy in Himself, but because He is the Author of holiness in believers. These considerations are motives to stir up and animate our wills to obey and co-operate with the will of God.—*R. Mant.*

Why was the Spirit sent? or, We must needs be Holy.

I. The coming of the Holy Ghost is to make us new creatures by giving us the strength to become so.

II. Since sanctification is declared to be the special work of the Holy Ghost, this clearly proves the difficulty of that work.

III. The work of sanctification is something more than merely driving out the evil one.

IV. Love and devotion to God are necessary to holiness.

V. Strength—the strength of the Holy Spirit—is necessary to defend holiness.—*A. W. Hare.*

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

Distinctive Features of a True Sanctification.

It is comparatively easy for some minds to grasp the broad outlines of a grand undertaking, but they fail in working out the details. It is a fatal defect, and involves the ruin of the whole scheme. The peculiar genius of minds like these is to deal with things in the mass; but they have not the ability or the patience to master a numerous and complicated series of minute particulars. They are more theoretical than practical; they are strong in the concrete, but feeble in the abstract faculty. So it is possible to form a bold conception of some great, leading Christian virtue, to expatiate on its exquisite beauty, to exalt in grandiose terms its supernatural dignity, and to enforce with magisterial importance its superlative necessity, but all the while to be lamentably deficient in practical attention to the thousand and one little details which, in every-day life, constitute the essence of the virtue. Sanctification is an aspect of the Christian life, facile and seductive in theory, but difficult and commonplace in practice. It is the essence and perfection of the Christian life, and is attained, not by some magical feat of the mental powers, but by patient plodding, stern conflicts, and hard-won moral victories. It is the sublime but little understood science of living aright, in the sight of God and man. Secretary Walsingham, in writing to Lord Burleigh, said: "We have lived long enough to our country, to our fortunes, and to our sovereign; it is high time that we began to live for ourselves and for our God." In the above verses are portrayed the distinctive feature of a true sanctification. Observe:—

I. A true sanctification consists in the maintenance of a personal chastity.—1. *This involves an abstinence from gross sensual indulgence.* "That you should

abstain from fornication" (ver. 3). A word that designates, not only the actual transgression known by that name, but all the sinful lusts of the flesh. This vice is a prolific source of many other vices. It is like the fabled Hydra, or many-headed snake, of which it is said that when one head was cut off another grew in its place. Fornication is the root of extravagance, drunkenness, disease, poverty, profanity, murder, and irreparable infamy. It is a sin the most bewitching, the most prevalent, the most fatal in its tendencies, and against which the most terrible vengeance of Heaven has been declared. It brought the flood on the world of the ungodly, fire and brimstone upon Sodom, pestilence upon the Israelites, and destruction upon the nations of antiquity. Prior to Christianity it was hardly regarded as a vice. The apostolic teaching revealed its enormity, denounced it with righteous indignation, and supplied the spiritual weapon by which it is to be slain.

2. *Involves a rigid maintenance of bodily purity.*—"That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour" (ver. 4). The vessel of the body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and whatever would defile or disgrace that sacred shrine must be carefully avoided. The apostle seems to imply there is a kind of art in chastity which all should practise. "That every one of you should know"—should have skill—the power of self-control. Christianity is the science of sciences, the art of living well, and no small skill is necessary in regulating the exercise of the Christian virtues. To *possess*—to rule the body in purity, keep a diligent guard upon the senses (Job xxxi. 1; Prov. xxiii. 33; Gen. xxxix. 6, 7), avoid the company of the sensual; be temperate; be industrious; continue instant in prayer.

3. *Involves a masterly restraint upon the passionate outgoings of evil desire.*—"Not in the lust of concupiscence; *not in the passion of lust;* even as the Gentiles which know not God" (ver. 5). Ignorance is the origin of unchastity; and the apostle shows to what extent of wickedness man may go who knows not God. An old writer says, "Ignorance is a master, a mother-sin; pull it, thou pullest all sin." Concupiscence is the rudimentary stage of evil desire; unchecked, it spreads through the soul, inflames the passions, and rises into an ungovernable tempest of lust. Evil must be restrained in its earliest manifestation, banished from the region of thought. The longer it is harboured, the more powerful it becomes.

> "We are not worst at once—the course of evil
> Begins so slowly and from such slight source,
> An infant's hand might stem its breach with clay;
> But let the stream get deeper, and philosophy shall strive in vain
> To turn the headlong current."

II. **A true sanctification consists in the universal exercise of strict justice.**—1. *That no violation of justice is allowable.* "That no man go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter" (ver. 6). The prohibition extends not only to acts of unchastity, but to all the transactions of life. The value of a commodity is governed by its use, its relation to the immediate wants of man. In nature that which has life and sense is more excellent than an inanimate creature; in this view an insect is superior to a diamond. But with regard to use, a loaf of bread is of more value than a thousand insects. Justice requires there should be a fair proportion between a thing and its price. To exact a price which is beyond the worth of the commodity sold, or to give a sum which is below its due value, is to overreach on the part of either the seller or the buyer. The commercial world of the present day might ponder with advantage the lessons to be learnt from the practice of an ancient Christian simplicity. The man who begins a course of dishonesty by defrauding a stranger will soon reach the point of cheating his dearest brother and chuckle at his unjust success.

2. *That every violation of justice will be certainly punished.*—"Because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified" (ver. 6). The rogue will not always triumph; and his ill-gotten gains may be the instruments of his curse. An all-seeing Eye watches all his sinuous trickeries, and an unseen Hand rests on all his covetous accumulations, and by-and-by the blow of vengeance will be swift and terrible. The successful robber is apt to lull himself into a false security; he has escaped disaster so often and so long that he begins to fancy his villainy may be continued with impunity. But their "judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not," for "the Lord is the avenger of all such" (see Prov. xxii. 22, 23, xxii. 10). Not that we are to act honestly from the fear of punishment; but while striving to act rightly from love to God and a lofty sense of duty, it is also salutary to remember that vengeance belongeth unto the Lord, and He will recompense. Where human justice fails, the divine vengeance will supply the deficiency, that injustice may not escape unpunished.

III. **That a true sanctification recognises the supreme authority of the divine call.**—"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (ver. 7). A holy life gives no licence to sin. Everything is in favour of holiness—the caller is holy (1 Pet. i. 15), the instrument holy (John xvii. 17), and the Spirit, the immediate worker, is the fountain of all holiness. Religion is a holy calling, because it leads to holiness; and though it finds us not holy, yet it makes us so. They answer not their calling who commit any manner of sin. Unmercifulness, cruelty, fornication, and uncleanness are not of God. In every temptation to evil remember the divine calling.

Lessons.—*A true sanctification*—1. *Provides for the chastity of the whole man.* 2. *Governs all the transactions of daily life.* 3. *Responds to the highest call of God.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 6. *Reason for Conscientiousness.*—A man was once asked why he was so very particular to give good measure—over good—and he replied: "God has given me but one journey through this world, and when I am gone I cannot return to correct mistakes."

Respect for Conscientiousness.—Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, once remarked respecting one of his pupils who was in the habit of attending to all his duties conscientiously and faithfully, "I could stand hat in hand to that boy."

Ver. 7. *Christian Holiness.*

I. **The nature of holiness.**—Conformity to the nature and will of God. Not to be confounded with virtue.

II. **The origin of holiness.**—It is immediately connected with regeneration. No holiness in man previous to this.

III. **The progress of holiness.**—The seed, the tree. The dawn, the day. The child, the man.

IV. **The objects of holiness.**—In reference to God, to the moral law, to duty, to sin.

V. **The influence of holiness.**—"There is an energy of moral suasion in a good man's life passing the highest efforts of the orator's genius. The seen but silent beauty of holiness speaks more eloquently of God and duty than the tongues of men and angels."—*G. Brooks.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 8.

A Word to the Despiser.

I. **The Christian minister is spiritually commissioned to exhort men to holiness.**—"Who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit." The apostles were

endowed for their special ministry by the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; they were infallibly guided into all truth; they wrought miracles; and their word was with power. Though miraculous gifts are no longer bestowed, Christian ministers are nevertheless called and qualified by the divine Spirit; they are empowered to proclaim the will of God and to urge men to reconciliation and purity (2 Cor. v. 20). The Rev. F. W. Robertson was once hesitating in the pulpit of a brother-clergyman which of two sermons he should preach. Something whispered to him, "Robertson, you are a craven; you dare not speak here what you believe." He selected a sermon that seemed almost personal in its faithfulness and power. But it was *the* message given to him for that hour.

II. **That the most faithful exhortations of the Christian minister may be despised.**—This is done when men reject the word spoken, refuse to listen to it, neglect to meditate upon it, and decline to enter upon the course of holy living which it counsels. This conduct shows:—

1. *The voluntary power of man.*—He can resist the truth or accept it. He is responsible for the exercise of all his moral powers, and therefore incurs guilt by any abuse of those powers.

2. *The blinding folly of sin.*—It darkens the understanding, perverts the will, petrifies the affections, and banishes the good that elevates and saves. Sin is also a force—a stealthy, remorseless, destructive force; wherever it breathes, it blasts and withers; wherever it plants its sharpened talons, it lacerates and destroys; and the disorder, the moral anarchy, the writhing agony of a groaning world bear witness to the terrible ravages of man's great enemy. To wilfully reject the overtures of righteousness is to relinquish the inheritance of eternal life, and to doom the soul to the endless miseries of spiritual death.

III. **That to despise the faithful exhortations of the Christian minister is to despise God.**—"He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God." The contempt of the true minister does not terminate in his person alone, but reaches the majesty of that Being by whom he is commissioned. To disregard the message of an ambassador is to despise the monarch he represents. The Saviour declared, "He that despiseth you, despiseth Me" (Luke x. 16). As the edicts proclaimed by the public herald are not his own, but the edicts of the prince who gives them authority and force, so the commands published by the divinely commissioned minister are not his own, but belong to Him whose will is the law of the universe. It belongs to God to reveal the law, freighted with His sanction and authority; it belongs to man to declare it. The exhortation, whether uttered by a Moses, who was commended for the beauty of his personal appearance, or by a Simeon Niger, who was remarkable for his physical deformity, is equally the word of God, to which the most reverential obedience is due. To despise the meanest of God's ministers is an insult to the majesty of Heaven, and will incur His terrible displeasure. In Retzsch's illustrations of Goethe's *Faust* there is one plate where angels are represented as dropping roses upon the demons who are contending for the soul of Faust. Every rose falls like molten metal, burning and blistering where it touches. So is it that truth acts upon the soul that has wilfully abandoned its teachings. It bewilders when it ought to guide.

Lessons.—1. *The divine commands concern man's highest good.* 2. *Take heed how ye hear.* 3. *To despise the divine message is to be self-consigned to endless woe.*

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

Brotherly Love the Proof of a True Sanctification.

Love is the bond of perfectness, the golden cincture that binds together and beautifies all the other graces of the Christian character. Christianity has rescued man from barbarism and slavery. It was the first to advocate and insist upon the common brotherhood of humanity, and, by inspiring in the heart the love of Christ, has made it possible for men to love each other as brethren. This was the most striking feature of the Christian spirit in the early times, and to which even the enemies of the Church bore testimony. In the second century the scoffing Lucian declared: "It is incredible to see the ardour with which the people of that religion help each other in their wants. They spare nothing. Their first legislator has put it into their heads that they are all brethren." The mutual exercise of love towards the brethren is an indisputable evidence of spiritual regeneration (1 John iii. 14); and in this chapter the apostle evidently alludes to it as the proof of a true sanctification. Observe:—

I. **That brotherly love is divinely taught.**—"For ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (ver. 9).

1. *It is commanded by Christ.*—"These things I command you, that ye love one another" (John xv. 17). This is a lesson the world never taught, and cannot teach. The natural heart is essentially selfish and cruel, and delights in fierce aggression on the rights of others, and in angry retaliation for fancied wrongs. Brotherly love is a fruit of Christianity, and is a powerful influence in harmonising the warring interests of humanity. If love prevail, other graces will not be absent.

2. *It has the example of Christ.*—He frequently reminds His disciples of what should be the scope and character of their love towards each other—"*As I have loved you*, that ye also love one another." The same glorious example was also the constant burden of the apostle's teaching, "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us" (John xiii. 34, xv. 12; Eph. v. 2). Brotherly love should be pure, humble, self-denying, fervent, unchangeable.

3. *It is its own commendation.*—"But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you." Love is modest and ingenuous in its exercise, making itself felt without obtrusiveness, and almost hiding itself underneath the multitude of benefits it creates. We should not hesitate to commend whatever good we see in others. The great Searcher of hearts does not pass over any good thing in a Church, though otherwise clouded with infirmities, without a laudatory notice (Rev. ii. 2, 3). A word of prudent commendation will often stimulate the soul in its endeavours after holiness.

4. *It is a grace divinely wrought.*—"Ye yourselves are taught of God." The heart is powerfully inclined to the exercise of this grace by the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, not independent of but in conjunction with the outward ministry of the word. The invariable method of divine teaching is explained in Jer. xxxi. 33; Acts xvi. 14. Those are easily taught whom God doth teach.

II. **That brotherly love must be practically manifested.**—"And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia" (ver. 10). Love is not limited by locality or distance; it is displayed, not only towards those we know and with whom we have Christian communion, but towards those whose faces we have not seen. The foreign missionary enterprise is a magnificent monument of modern Christian charity. Love should be practically manifested in supplying, as far as means and opportunity will allow, each other's need, in bearing one another's burdens, in forgiving one another, and, if necessary, in kindly

reproving one another. During the retreat of Alfred the Great, at Athelney, in Somersetshire, after the defeat of his forces by the Danes, a beggar came to his little castle there and requested alms. When his queen informed him they had only one small loaf remaining, which was insufficient for themselves and the friends who had gone abroad in quest of food with little hope of success, the king replied: "Give the poor Christian one half of the loaf. He who could feed five thousand men with five loaves and two small fishes, can certainly make that half of the loaf suffice for more than our necessities." Accordingly the poor man was relieved, and this noble act of charity was soon recompensed by a providential store of fresh provisions with which the foraging party returned.

III. **That brotherly love is susceptible of continuous enlargement.**—"But we beseech, you, brethren, that ye increase more and more" (ver. 10). Notwithstanding the commendation of the apostle, he exhorts the Thessalonians to seek greater perfection in this grace. What is the sun without light? What is fire without heat? So what is life without love? The rich seek to increase their store, the wicked add to their iniquities; the saint should not be less diligent in increasing unto every good word and work. "A child that stayeth at one stature and never groweth bigger is a monster. The ground that prospereth not and is not fruitful is cursed. The tree that is barren and improveth not is cut down. So must all increase in the way of godliness and go forward therein. Unless we go forward, we slip back" (*Jewell*). The growth of charity is *extensive*, as it adds to the number of the objects loved, and *intensive* as to its inward fervour and tenacity. The more we apprehend the love of God to ourselves, the more our hearts will enlarge in love to Him and all saints. True brotherly love crushes all self-love, and is more anxious to hide than pry into the infirmities of others. Seldom is a charitable man curious, or a curious man charitable.

Lessons.—1. *That brotherly love is the practical manifestation of the love of God in man.* 2. *That brotherly love should be constantly cultivated.* 3. *That brotherly love is a crowning feature of the higher Christian life.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 9, 10. *Brotherly Love*—

I. **An evidence of practical holiness.**

II. **An affection divinely taught.**

III. **Should be constantly manifested.**

IV. **Grows by diligent cultivation.**

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

A Pacific Spirit another Proof of a True Sanctification.

To pass from the subject of brotherly love to the necessity of maintaining a quiet and peaceable disposition was for the apostle a natural and suggestive transition. Love and peace are twin virtues—"Two lovely berries moulded on one stem." Brotherly love can have no place in the heart from which peace has fled and where war and discord reign. The quiet spirit is not a weak, meaningless, cowardly condition of mind, but contains in it all the elements of patient endurance, unconquerable bravery, and inviolable moral power. It is not the quietness of the shallow lagoon, on whose surface the heaviest storm can raise but a few powerless ripples; it is rather the profound calm of the ocean, which, when roused by the tempest, is overwhelmed in its impetuous onset. Christ is likened to the lamb—gentle, harmless, pacific; but when His fury is once let loose upon the ungodly, the distracted victims will shriek for the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the face of Him that

sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. A pacific spirit is another practical evidence of possessing the genuine sanctification so earnestly commended by the apostle. Observe:—

I. **That a pacific spirit is to be studiously cultivated.**—"And that ye study to be quiet" (ver. 11). The word "study" signifies to seek after an object with a holy and active ambition, as though it were the highest honour to possess it. How different this is from the restless spirit of the world! There is nothing some people dread so much as being quiet. They delight in a row; and if one does not happen as frequently as they wish, they make one for themselves. The political agitator, the avaricious money-getter, the fiery advocate of war, all seek to attain their selfish ends in the midst of tumult and confusion. Nor is the sacred circle of the Christian Church, which should ever be the abode of peace and harmony, free from the violence of the irrepressible disturber. There are some people who never will be still; you cannot hold them still. They are full of endless suggestions for other people to carry out. Their tongue is a perpetual clatter. They fly from one department of work to another, and create distraction in each. They are always on the go. No sooner have they related to one, with such evident satisfaction, the details of the latest uproar they were in, than they are off to brew another. They try one's temper; they harry one's nerves; they break one's peace most cruelly. To such people it would be the severest task to obey the apostolic injunction, "That ye study to be quiet," and yet no one in the world has more need to do so than they. A pacific spirit cannot be secured without much self-denying effort; but it is a jewel worth all the trouble and all the sacrifice (Prov. xx. 3; Col. iii. 12-15).

II. **That a pacific spirit is attained by a persevering industry in personal duties.**—1. *That personal duties have the first claim upon our efforts.* "Do your own business" (ver. 11). Attend first to your personal concerns—whatever comes within the compass of your general or particular calling. The man who is inattentive to his own special duties cannot with any reason dictate as to the duties of others. To do one's own business is the best safeguard against idleness and meddling curiosity. Solomon declared, "Every fool will be meddling." An officious interference with the business of others creates discords. All strifes—domestic, social, ecclesiastical, and political—may be traced to meddlesomeness. The meddling man is a fool, because he gratifies his own idle curiosity at the expense of his own well-being and the happiness of others. See that the business you do is your own business, and that you let that of your neighbours alone. "Be not eavesdroppers, hearkening what is said or done in your neighbour's house. Wide ears and long tongues dwell together. They that love to hear all that may be told them do also love to blab out all they hear" (*Jewell*).

2. *That personal duties demand genuine hard work.*—"And to work with your own hands" (ver. 11). The claims and enjoyments of religion do not release us from the necessity of toiling for our daily bread and providing things honest in the sight of all men. True religion rather consists in doing all the work of life with consistency, diligence, and perseverance. Manual labour is not the only form of genuine industry. The industry of some of our public men is something amazing. There is no greater foe to piety than idleness. It is the beginning of many other evils, and has been the origin of many a career that has ended with the prison and the gallows. An idle man is always something worse. His brain is the shop for the devil, where he forges the most debasing fancies and plots the most pernicious schemes. Many take more pains to go to hell than almost the holiest to go to heaven. Hièrome used to say that a man who labours disheartens even the devil himself.

3. *That industry in personal duties is enforced by apostolic precept.*—"As we commanded you" (ver. 11). The apostle frequently took occasion to enforce upon

his converts the importance of diligence in one's daily business, and set them an example in his own conduct (2 Thess. iii. 7, 8). Honest labour is not beneath the dignity of any, and he who works the hardest has the greater influence in enforcing industry upon others.

III. **That a pacific spirit, combined with diligence, recommends Christianity to those outside the Church.**—"That ye may walk honestly towards them that are without" (ver. 12). Industry is no small part of honesty. A lazy man can never be an honest one, though his chastity and fidelity were as renowned as Joseph's, if that were possible to a mere idler. A restless, trifling busybody does unspeakable damage to religion. Many, who are Christians by profession, are often more heathenish in practice, and the blindest among the aliens are swift to detect and pronounce judgment on their dishonesty. The unbelieving world, on the other hand, is impressed and attracted by the peaceful and diligent behaviour of the faithful. Human nature is powerfully influenced by appearances.

IV. **That a pacific spirit, combined with diligence, ensures an honoured independence.**—"And that ye may have lack of nothing" (ver. 12). It is more blessed to be able to give than to receive. What a mercy it is neither to know the power and misery of those temptations which arise from pinching poverty, nor yet to be necessitated to depend upon the cold-hearted, merciless charity of others. The patient, quiet persevering plodder in the way of Christian duty may not always be rewarded with affluence; but he is encouraged to expect, at least, a modest competency. And the very spirit he has striven to cultivate has enriched him with an inheritance, which few possibly attain—*contentment with his lot.* He whose is the silver and the gold will care for His loved and faithful servants (Ps. xxxvii. 25).

Lessons.—1. *Quarrelsomeness and indolence cannot co-exist with a high degree of sanctity.* 2. *To secure the blessings of peace is worthy of the most industrious study.* 3. *The mightiest aggressions of the gospel upon the world are made quietly.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSE.

Ver. 11. *Study to be Quiet.*

I. **Make it our meditation day and night and fill our minds with it.**

II. **Put our meditation into practice.**

III. **We must unlearn many things before we can be taught this.**—1. *Cast out self-love.* 2. *Covetousness.* 3. *Pull back our ambition.* 4. *Bind our malice.* 5. *Empty ourselves of all suspicion, surmising, and discontent.*

IV. **Mind our own business.**—1. *Because it is becoming.* 2. *Brings advantage.* 3. *It is necessary.* 4. *We are commanded to do so.*—*Farindon.*

Mind your own Business.

I. **The Bible contains little encouragement for the idler.**

II. **The text enjoins diligence not only in business, but in one's own business.**

III. **The counsel of the apostle is supported by the best wisdom of the world.**—"It becomes a man," said Herodotus, "to give heed to those things only which concern himself."

IV. **The apostle takes it for granted that ours is a worthy business.**

V. **Only by diligence in the care of your own souls will you be able to do really effective work for Christ.**—*A. F. Forrest.*

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

Sorrow for the Dead.

The Thessalonians who cherished a vivid expectation of the near approach of the second advent of Christ appear to have fallen into a misconception as to the

relation of their deceased friends to that glorious event. While believing that the pious dead would ultimately be raised again, they feared they would not be permitted to share in the joy of welcoming Him back to His inheritance of the redeemed earth and in the triumphant inauguration of His reign. "It was just as if, on the very eve of the day of the expected return of some long absent father, a cruel fate should single out one fond expectant child, and hurry him to a far distant and inhospitable shore." But all their fears and perplexities were dissipated by the sublime disclosures contained in this epistle.

I. **That sorrow is a merciful relief to a soul bereaved.**—Sorrow is nowhere forbidden. It may be an infirmity, but it is at the same time a solace. The soul oppressed and stricken by the weight of a great calamity finds relief in tears.

> "O ye tears! O ye tears! till I felt you on my cheek,
> I was selfish in my sorrow, I was stubborn, I was weak;
> Ye have given me strength to conquer, and I stand erect and free,
> And know that I am human, by the light of sympathy."

The religion of the Bible does not destroy human passions. We do not part with our nature when we receive the grace of God. The mind that is capable of a *real sorrow* is capable of good. A griefless nature can never be a joyous one.

II. **That sorrow for the dead is aggravated by ignorance of their future destiny.**—"I would not have you to be ignorant concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (ver. 13). The radius of hope is contracted or expanded in proportion to the character and extent of intelligence possessed. Ignorant "sorrow is a kind of rust to the soul, which every new idea contributes in its passage to scour away. It is the putrefaction of stagnant life, and is remedied by exercise and motion." The heathen, who have no satisfactory knowledge of the future life, give way to an excessive and hopeless grief. Du Chaillu describes a scene of wailing for the dead among the Africans. "The mother of poor Tonda," he writes, "led me to the house where the body was laid. The narrow space of the room was crowded; about two hundred women were sitting and standing around, singing mourning songs to doleful and monotonous airs. As I stood looking, filled with solemn thoughts, the mother of Tonda approached. She threw herself at the foot of her dead son, and begged him to speak to her once more. And then when the corpse did not answer she uttered a shriek, so long, so piercing, such a wail of love and grief that tears came into my eyes. Poor African mother! She was literally as one sorrowing without hope, for these people count on nothing beyond the present life." It was the dictum of an old Greek poet—a man once dead there is no revival; and those words indicated the dismal condition of unenlightened nature in all lands and in all ages. What an urgent argument is here for increased missionary efforts among the heathen!

III. **That sorrow for the dead in Christ is soothed and moderated by the revelation of certain great truths concerning their present and future blessedness.**—1. *That death is a sleep.* "Them also which sleep in Jesus" (ver. 14). The only part of man to which the figure of the text applies is the body. As to the soul, the day of death is the day of our birth into a progressive and eternal life. It is called a departure, a being with Christ—absent from the body, present with the Lord. *Sleep is expressive of rest.* When the toil of life's long day is ended, the great and good Father draws the dark curtain of night and hushes His weary children to rest. "They enter into rest." *Sleep is expressive of refreshment.* The body is laid in the grave, feeble, emaciated, worn out. Then a wonderful process goes on, perceptible only to the eye of God, by which the body acquires new strength and beauty, and becomes a fit instrument and suitable residence for the glorified soul. *Sleep implies the expectation of awaking.* We commit the bodies of the departed to the earth in sure and certain hope of a

glorious resurrection. They wait for "the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body."

2. *That the dead in Christ will be roused from their holy slumber and share in the glory of His second advent.*—"Will God bring with Him" (ver. 14). The resurrection of the dead is a divine work. "I will redeem them from the power of the grave." Christ will own His people in their persons, their services, and their sufferings. They shall receive His entire approval, be welcomed by Him into His everlasting kingdom, and crowned by Him with glory and the affluence of incorruptible bliss.

3. *That the resurrection of Christ from the dead is a pledge of the restoration and future blessedness of all who sleep in Him.*—"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (ver. 14). Christ Himself is the resurrection, not only as revealed in His word and exemplified in His own person, but as specially appointed by the Father to effect it by His own power (John v. 25, vi. 39). The word of God sheds a light across the darkness of the grave, and opens a vista radiant with hope and immortal happiness. "Let me penetrate into Thy heart, O God," said an afflicted saint, "and read the love that is there. Let me penetrate into Thy mind, and read the wisdom that is there; then shall I be satisfied—the storm shall be turned into calm." A vital knowledge of Christ silences every murmur and prepares for every emergency.

Lessons.—1. *An ignorant sorrow is a hopeless one.* 2. *To rise with Jesus we must live and die to Him.* 3. *Divine revelations regarding the future life greatly moderate the grief of the present.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 13, 14. *The Sleep of the Faithful Departed.*

I. **The dead are said to be asleep because we know they shall wake up again.**

II. **Because they whom men call dead do really live unto God.**

III. **Because they are taking their rest.**

IV. **Death is changed to sleep, so that it becomes a pledge of rest and a prophecy of the resurrection.**

Lessons.—1. *We ought to mourn rather for the living than for the dead.* 2. *In very truth it is life rather than death that we ought to fear.*—*H. E. Manning.*

Ver. 14. *The Resurrection of the Body.*

I. **The heart seeks it.**

II. **The Bible declares it.**

III. **The redemption of Christ secures it.**—*A. F. Forrest.*

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

The Second Advent of Christ.

Among the words of consolation in the valedictory discourse of Christ to His disciples was the promise, after His departure, He would come again and receive them unto Himself. Time has sped noiselessly along; events of vast magnitude have rapidly succeeded each other, and left their lessons for the ages to ponder; nations have passed through the throes of suffering and revolution; generation after generation has gone down to the grave; for nearly nineteen hundred years the Church has been strained with profound, intense, and anxious expectancy: but still the promise remains unfulfilled. Will He come? Are the hopes of the Church doomed to be for ever unsatisfied? Must the bodies of the pious dead be for ever shut down in the sepulchres of land and sea? Will

the wrongs of the universe never be redressed? If questions like these flit for a moment across the mind, it is not that the Church has lost confidence in the promise. Faith in the second advent of Christ is more widely spread and more firmly held to-day than ever. Long waiting has sharpened the longing, brightened the hope, and clarified the vision. In these words the apostle assures the Thessalonians of the second coming of Christ, furnishes some important particulars of the event, and points out the bearing of the glorious doctrine in consoling the sorrow of the bereaved.

I. **That the second advent of Christ is the subject of divine revelation.**—"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord" (ver. 15). In a subject of such vast moment the apostle was anxious to show that he had the highest and most incontrovertible authority for the statements he uttered. He had a special revelation from heaven, and spoke under the direct and immediate inspiration of the divine Spirit. The second advent of Christ is emphatically taught in the Holy Scriptures (cf. Matt. xxiv. 3, xxv. 31; Mark viii. 3; John xiv. 3; Acts i. 2, iii. 19, 20; Rom. viii. 17; 1 Cor. i. 8; 2 Tim. iv. 1; Tit. ii. 13; 1 Pet. i. 5; 2 Pet. iii. 12; Jude 14).

II. **That the second advent of Christ will be distinguished by signal tokens of terrible majesty.**—1. *There will be the triumphant shout of the divine Redeemer.* "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout" (ver. 16). Just before Jesus expired on the cross He cried with a loud voice, and though there was the ring of victory in that cry, it sounded more like a conscious relief from unutterable suffering. But the shout of Jesus on his second coming will be like the loud, clear, joyous battle-shout of a great Conqueror. That shout will break the silence of the ages, will startle the universe into attention, will raise the dead, and summon all people into the presence of the victorious Messiah. Formerly He did "not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street" (Isa. xlii. 2). But now is the revelation of His power. "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence" (Ps. l. 3, 4).

2. *There will be the voice of the archangel* (ver. 16).—The angelic hosts are arranged in an hierarchy of various ranks and orders. The archangel is the chief of the heavenly multitude. In response to the majestic shout of the descending Lord, the archangel lifts up his voice, like the loud cry of the herald announcing the glorious advent, and the sound is caught up and prolonged by the vast hosts of celestial attendants.

3. *There will be the trumpet-blast.*—"With the trump of God," with trumpet sounded by the command of God—such a trumpet, perhaps, as is used in the service of God in heaven. Besides the shout of Jesus and the voice of the archangel, the sound of the trumpet will also be heard in the host. It is called in 1 Cor. xv. 52 "the last trumpet"; and in Matt. xxiv. 31 we read, "He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect." Among the Hebrews, Greeks, and ancient Latins it was the custom to summon the people with the trumpet. In this way God is said to gather His people together (Isa. xxvii. 13; Jer. iv. 5, vi. 1). The whole passage is designed to show that the second advent of King Messiah will be attended by the most imposing evidences of pomp and regal splendour.

III. **That the second advent of Christ will be followed by important consequences to the people of God, living and dead.**—1. *The pious dead shall be raised.* "We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. And the dead in Christ shall rise first" (vers. 15, 16). The living at that day—who, it would seem, would be spared the necessity of dying and seeing corruption—shall, nevertheless, have no advantage over the dead. Before any change takes place in the living to fit them for the new condition of things, the dead in Christ shall rise first, and be clothed with immortality

and incorruptible splendour. Whatever disadvantages may be the lot of some of God's people over others, they are ever recompensed by some special privilege or prerogative. The best state for us is that in which God places us. And yet every man thinks another's condition happier than his own. Rare indeed is the man who thinks his own state and condition in every respect best for him.

2. *The living and the raised shall unite in a simultaneous greeting of their descending Lord.*—"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (ver. 17). The living, after passing through the wondrous change from mortal to immortal, shall not anticipate for a single moment the newly raised bodies of the pious dead, but together with them, in one reunited, loving, inseparable company, shall be caught away in chariots of clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and greet Him in the descent. He comes to fulfil His promise (John xiv. 3).

3. *All believers in Christ shall be assured of eternal felicity with Him.*—"And so shall we ever be with the Lord" (ver. 17). For ever with the Lord in familiar companionship—in rapturous communion, in impending glory, in ever-enchanting revelations. With Him, not occasionally, or for an age, or a millennium, but uninterruptedly for ever, without the possibility of separation. How great the contrast with the brightest experiences of this changeful life! There are three things which eminently distinguish the heavenly life of the soul—perfection, perpetuity, immutability.

IV. **That the contemplation of the second advent of Christ is calculated to minister consolation to the sorrowing.**—"Therefore comfort one another with these words" (ver. 18). A community in suffering creates a community in sympathy. "If a thorn be in the foot, the back bows, the eye is busy to pry into the hurt, the hands do their best to pluck out the cause of anguish; even so we are members one of another. To him that is afflicted, pity should be showed from his friend" (Job vi. 14). The best consolation is that which is drawn from the revelations of God's word. There are no comforts like Scripture comforts. The bereaved were sorrowing for their loved ones who had been smitten down by death, and were full of anxiety and uncertainty about the future. Shall they meet again, or are they parted for ever? The teaching of inspiration on the second coming of Christ assures them that their departed relatives shall be rescued from the power of death, that they shall meet again, meet in glory, meet to part no more, to be for ever with each other and with the Lord.

Lessons.—1. *The Church is justified in looking for the second advent of Christ.* 2. *The second advent of Christ will bring an everlasting recompense for the suffering and sorrow of the present life.* 3. *The record that reveals the second advent of Christ should be fondly prized and constantly pondered*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 15-18. *The Second Coming of Christ and Sorrow for the Dead.*

I. **The final period of the world the apostles left undetermined.**

II. **Though ignorant of the final period of the world, they were confident it should not come till the prophecies respecting the destiny of the Church were accomplished.**

III. **The Church, being ignorant of the day in which Christ should come to judge the world, should be always ready for that event.**

IV. **Sorrow for the dead is compatible with the hope of a Christian.**—1. *When it proceeds from sympathy.* 2. *From the dictates of nature.* 3. *From repentance.*—*Saurin.*

Ver. 18. *The Duty of comforting One Another.*

I. We must observe a rule and method in this duty.

II. This method is taught not in the school of nature, but of Christ.—1. *In general we must comfort one another with the word of God.* 2. *We must comfort one another with the Scripture teaching on the coming of the Lord and the resurrection of the dead.*—*Farindon.*

CHAPTER V.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Times and seasons.**—The one is the even, continuous flow of the river, the other is the cataract. Seasons we may represent as epochs. Our Lord in the same words refused to gratify the curiosity of His followers (Acts i. 7).

Ver. 2. **For yourselves know perfectly.**—The adverb here is the same as in Eph. v. 15 (A.V. "circumspectly," R.V. "carefully"). It is used five times only in the New Testament. The translations are interesting—Matt. ii. 8: A.V. "diligently," R.V. "carefully." Luke i. 3: R.V. "accurately." Acts xviii. 25 (like Matt. ii. 8). Perhaps the Thessalonians had asked for precise information. "The apostle replies, with a touch of gentle irony, "You already know precisely that nothing precise on the subject can be known—that the great day will steal upon the world like a thief in the night" (*Findlay*).

Ver. 3. **For when they shall say.**—R.V. "when they are saying." No matter at what hour they say, "Peace and security," like the voice of the watchman crying, "All's well." **Then sudden destruction.**—The word for "sudden" is only found again at Luke xxi. 34 in the New Testament. It is really unforeseen. **As travail.**—In the simile there is the suggestion that the day cannot be far off though not exactly known.

Ver. 5. **Children of light.**—Quite an Oriental expression. The kings of Egypt called themselves "children of the sun." So these of a better sun.

Ver. 6. **Let us watch and be sober.**—Ever on the alert as men who live in hourly expectation of their Lord's arrival. It is precisely they who maintain the preparedness of spirit who are calm when the midnight cry rings out, "The bridegroom cometh."

Ver. 7. **They that be drunken are drunken in the night.**—The explanation is given in our Lord's words—"because their deeds are evil": as though darkness could veil the loss of self-respect.

Ver. 9. **For God hath not appointed us to wrath.**—The inevitable sequence of a life of sensual gratification. The very severest forms of expression for wrath fell from the gentlest lips concerning the servant who falls to gluttony and drunkenness because his lord does not appear at the expected hour (Luke xii. 45, 46).

Ver. 12. **Them which labour among you and are over you in the Lord.**—"A clear testimony, from this earliest New Testament writing, to the existence in the Church at the beginning of a ministerial order—a clergy as distinguished from the laity—charged with specific duties and authority. But there is nothing in grammar nor in the nature of the duties specified which would warrant us in distributing these functions amongst distinct orders of Church office" (*Ibid.*).

Ver. 13. **And to esteem them very highly in love.**—R.V. "exceeding highly"—the same Greek adverb as in iii. 10, the strongest intensive possible to the language. So deep and warm should be the affection uniting pastors and their flocks. Their appreciation is not to be a cold esteem (*Ibid.*).

Ver. 14. **Warn them that are unruly.**—R.V. "admonish the disorderly." Every Church knows these characters—men who will break through all restraint. **Comfort the feeble-minded.**—R.V. "encourage the faint-hearted." In ii. 11 we have met the verb before. The feeble-minded would have been scarcely worth the pity of the philosophers with whom alone the great-souled man was supreme. The comfort in that teaching, for the hour when the strong shall be as tow, was very scanty and inadequate. **Support the weak.**—So be like the Lord who "upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down" (Ps. cxlv. 14). **Be patient toward all men.**—R.V. "longsuffering." It is the very opposite of what we mean by being "short-tempered."

Ver. 15. **Evil for evil.**—A *quid pro quo*, similar in kind and in quantity perhaps, but retaliation delights in interest.

Ver. 19. **Quench not the Spirit.**—When there has been excess, and a good has come into disrepute, it is natural to seek to stifle down further manifestations of it. The energy of the Holy Spirit, like Pentecostal flame, is regarded as being capable of extinction.

Ver. 20. **Despise not prophesyings.**—Do not set down as of no value, prophesyings. The word for "despise" is used of those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and set at nought others (Luke xviii. 9), and the contemptuous bearing of him who eats flesh with which an idol's name has been associated, and laughs at the shuddering scruples of the brother who thinks it a dreadful thing to do, and sets him at nought (Rom. xiv. 3-10). The prophesyings at Corinth were such as might easily be contemned (1 Cor. xiv. 23).

Ver. 21. **Prove all things.**—Make trial of all. A sentence fatal to the suppression of inquiry and to credulous faith. It forbids me to accept what is given out as prophecy even, unless it has a self-evidencing power. **Hold fast that which is good.**—The good here is that which is ethically beautiful. In ver. 15 another word points the contrast to the evil return of injury.

Ver. 22. **Abstain from all appearance of evil.**—Perhaps the best idea of the word rendered "abstain" would be gained by "hold off," in antithesis to the "hold fast" of ver. 21.

Ver. 23. **Sanctify you wholly.**—"Rather—unto completeness. The apostle prays that they may be sanctified to the fullest extent" (*Ibid.*). **Your whole spirit . . . be preserved blameless.**—R.V. "be preserved entire, without blame." "From the degree of holiness desired we pass to its range, from its intension (as the logicians would say) to its extension" (*Ibid.*).

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—11.

The Attitude of the Church towards the Second Coming of Christ.

The book that records the *first* advent of the Redeemer closes, anticipating, desiring, beseeching the *second*—"Even so, come, Lord Jesus." The revelation concerning that second coming is distinct and emphatic; but the exact period, when the event will happen, is wrapped in uncertainty. As when we ascend a winding river some well-known landmark appears to alter its position, seeming now distant, now near—so, at different points on the circuitous stream of life, the familiar subject of the second Advent reveals itself as a near or remote event. "It is plain," says Archer Butler, "that that period which is distant in one scheme of things may be near in another, where events are on a vaster scale and move in a mightier orbit. That which is a whole life to the ephemera is but a day to the man; that which in the brief succession of authentic human history is counted as remote, is but a single page in the volume of the heavenly records. The coming of Christ may be distant as measured on the scale of human life, but may be 'near,' and 'at hand,' and 'at the door,' when the interval of the two advents is compared, not merely with the four thousand years which were but its preparation, but with the line of infinite ages which it is itself preparing." The uncertainty of the time of the second Advent and its stupendous issues define the attitude of the Church.

I. **It is an attitude of expectancy.**—1. *The time of the second coming is uncertain.* "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you" (ver. 1). A gentle hint that all questions on that subject were unnecessary, as there was nothing more to be revealed. The untamable curiosity and reckless daring of man tempt him to pry into secrets with which he has nothing to do and to dogmatise on subjects of which he knows the least. Many have been fanatical enough to fix the day of the Lord's coming. For a time there has been a local excitement; the day has come and gone; the world has moved on as before, and the prophetic enthusiasts have exposed themselves to scorn and ridicule. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man" (Mark xiii. 32). This uncertainty is a perpetual stimulant to the people of God to exercise the ennobling virtues of hope, of watchfulness, of fidelity, of humility, of earnest inquiry, and of reverential awe.

2. *The second coming will be sudden.*—"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child" (vers. 2, 3). The thief not only gives no notice of his approach, but takes every possible care to conceal his designs. The discovery of the mischief he has wrought takes place when it is too late. The prudent will take every precaution to avoid surprise and to baffle the subtlety and sharpness of the marauder. That which is sinful and unlawful in itself affords a resemblance to express an important truth and to admonish to duty. There is nothing more certain than that the Lord *will* come; nothing more uncertain *when* He will come; and both the one and the other should keep His people in an attitude of prayerful expectation and moral preparedness. Faith breeds fear; the more earnestly we believe, the more we tremble at the divine threatenings. Unbelief lulls the soul into false security. What a dreadful awakening will that be, when the thunder of God's wrath shall suddenly burst from the hitherto tranquil heavens!

3. *The second coming will be terrible to the wicked.*—"And they shall not escape" (ver. 3). Wicked men are never more secure than when destruction is nearest, never nearer destruction than when they are most secure. The swearer may be seized while the oath is burning on his tongue, the drunkard engulfed in judgment while the cup is trembling between his lips. The other day a certain suspension bridge was crowded with pleasure seekers; the slender erection, yielding under the unwonted strain, broke in two, and in a moment precipitated numbers into the river rolling below and into a watery grave. Not less fragile is the confidence on which the unbelieving rest; and more terrible still will be the catastrophe that will suddenly overtake them. The destruction of the wicked —of all their joy, of all they most prized in this life—will be sudden, painful, inevitable. Now there is peace, for mercy reigns; but when the great day comes there will be nothing but indignation and wrath, tribulation, and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil (Rom. ii. 8, 9).

II. **It is an attitude of vigilance.**—1. *This vigilance is enforced on the ground of a moral transformation.* "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (vers. 4, 5). Believers in Christ are delivered from the power of darkness, of spiritual ignorance, of godless profanity, of dark and dangerous security, and translated into the kingdom of light, of truth, of purity, and felicity. They are children of the day when the light shines the brightest, when privileges are more abundant, when opportunities multiply, and responsibility is correspondingly increased. The light of past ages was but the dawn of the effulgent day which now shines upon the world from the gospel sun. Every inquiring and believing soul passes from the dawn to the daylight of experimental truth.

2. *This vigilance must be constant.*—"Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night" (vers. 6, 7). Let us not, like the drunkards steeped in sottish slumber, be immersed in the deep sleep of sin and unconcern, neglecting duty, and never thinking of a judgment; but let us watch, and, in order to do so effectually, be sober. We are day-people, not night-people; therefore our work ought to be day-work, not night-work; our conduct such as will bear the eye of day, and has no need to hide itself under the veil of night. A strict sobriety is essential to a sleepless vigilance.

III. **It is an attitude of militant courage.**—"But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the hope of salvation" (ver. 8). The Christian has to fight the enemy, as well as

watch against him. He is a soldier, and a soldier on sentry. The Christian life is not one of soft, luxurious ease; it is a hard, fierce conflict. The graces of faith, love, and hope constitute the most complete armour of the soul. The breastplate and helmet protect the two most vital parts—the head and the heart. With head and heart right, the whole man is right. Let us keep the head from error and the heart from sinful lust, and we are safe. The best guards against error in religion and viciousness in life are—faith, hope, and charity; these are the virtues that inspire the most enterprising bravery. Drunkards and sluggards never make good soldiers.

IV. **It is an attitude of confidence as to the future blessedness of the Church.**—1. *This blessedness is divinely provided.* "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us" (vers. 9, 10). The whole scheme of salvation was divinely conceived and divinely carried out in all its essential details. And, without discussing other methods by which the salvation of the race could be effected, it is sufficient for us to know that the infallible wisdom of God provided that the death of His Son was the most effectual method. Our sins had exposed us to the wrath of God, who had declared death to be the penalty of sin. This death Christ underwent on our behalf, in our stead, and so saved us from it. In every extremity, at every new challenge of the enemy, on each successive field of effort and peril, this is the password and battle-cry of God's people—*Christ died for us.*

2. *This blessedness consists in a constant fellowship with Christ.*—"That whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him" (ver. 10). The happiest moments on earth are those spent in the company of the good, reciprocating the noblest ideas and emotions. Christ, by dying for us, has begotten us into a life of ineffable and endless felicity; and "the hope of salvation" enables us to look forward to the period when, released from the sorrows and uncertainties of this changeful life, we shall enjoy the bliss of uninterrupted communion with Jesus.

"The soul to be where Jesus is
Must be for ever blest."

3. *The confidence of inheriting this blessedness encourages mutual edification.*—"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" (ver. 11). "All Christians indiscriminately are to use these doctrines for mutual exhortation and mutual edification. And so the spirit of the verse will be this: Comfort one another as to this matter, and then, free from the distracting and paralysing influence of vain misgivings, go on edifying one another in all the relations, and by all the means and appliances of your Church fellowship; even as also ye do. Ye do it now, in the midst of your own secret, personal sorrows and depressing fears. But you will be able to do it more effectively, with the clearer views I have now given you of what awaits us all—those sleeping in Jesus, and us who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" (*Lillie*).

Lessons.—1. *The great event of the future will be the second coming of Christ.* 2. *That event should be looked for in a spirit of sobriety and vigilance.* 3. *That event will bring unspeakable felicity to the good and dismay and misery to the wicked.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 2. *The Day of the Lord*—

I. **A day which will be in some unique and pre-eminent sense His day.**

II. **It is the day of judgment.**

III. **The coming of His day is suggestive of fear.**—"As a thief in the night."

IV. **It will come suddenly.**

V. **Cannot be prevented by any efforts of our own.**

VI. **We may prepare for the day of judgment by judging ourselves in self-examination.**—*H. P. Liddon.*

Ver. 6. *The Pilgrims on the Enchanted Ground.*

I. **Hopeful keeps awake by goodly counsel and discourse.**

II. **Ignorance comes up again.**—1. *Ignorance explains the ground of his hope.* 2. *Christian explains what good thoughts are.* 3. *Ignorance speaks reproachfully about things he knows not.* 4. *He again falls behind.*

III. **Christian and Hopeful renew their conversation.**—1. *Reflections over the conduct of Ignorance.* 2. *Why ignorant people stifle conviction.* 3. *Reasons why some backslide.*

IV. **Some lessons from this stage.**—1. *In times of danger it is wise to recall former experiences.* 2. *Human philosophy may seem very wise, but the Bible is an unfailing touchstone.—Homiletic Monthly.*

Moral Sleep.

I. **The season devoted to sleep is one of darkness.**—He is in darkness as to God, himself, and the gospel.

II. **Sleep is often sought for and obtained by the use of opiates.**—These are: 1. *The falsehoods of Satan.* 2. *The pleasures of sense.* 3. *The fellowship of the world.*

III. **During sleep the mind is usually occupied with dreams.**—The life of the ungodly is one continued dream.

IV. **He who is asleep is in a great measure insensible to pain.**—1. *The sting of sin is in man's nature.* 2. *Through this sleep he feels it not.—Stewart.*

Vers. 9, 10. *Salvation is of God.*

I. **The choice of God.**—1. *It was early.* 2. *It was free.* 3. *Efficacious.* 4. *Appropriating.*

II. **The work of Christ.**—He died as our Substitute. 1. *This fact explains His death.* 2. *Vindicates the justice of God in His death.* 3. *Displays the love of Christ.*

III. **The privilege and duty of Christians.**—1. *Life in Christ.* 2. *Life with Christ.* 3. *In Him and with Him here and hereafter.—G. Brooks.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 12, 13.

The Treatment due to the Ministerial Office.

An excessive modesty prevents many ministers from calling attention to the sacred office they hold, and to the respect in which it should ever be regarded by those over whom they have the oversight. Such a modesty is inexcusable. To say nothing of the contempt with which the world looks upon the ministerial office, there are thousands within the Church who are utterly ignorant of its duties and awful responsibilities, and who have but vague, distorted notions of their duty towards the men who first led them to Christ, and who have been instructing them in the truths for years. Let not the minister hesitate, even at the risk of being thought egotistical, to speak on this subject, and enforce the New Testament teaching. The apostle was not withheld by any false sense of modesty from pointing out, with all emphasis and authority, the obligations of the Church towards those who minister in the word and doctrine. Observe:—

I. **The distinctive duties belonging to the ministerial office.**—1. *To labour.* "Them which labour among you" (ver. 12), even unto weariness, as the verb signifies. The work of the faithful minister is no sinecure; it taxes all the powers of the brain and muscle. It is a work demanding prolonged and earnest study, intense feeling, and ceaseless toil.

2. *To rule.*—"And are over you in the Lord" (ver. 12). The minister is not simply a sort of popular delegate or hired agent, bound to receive the instructions, execute the wishes, and flatter the humours of his constituents. He is, indeed, the servant, in the proper sense of that word, but not the slave and tool of the

Church. The right to speak and act in the name of Christ carries with it an aspect of pre-eminence and authority, and the same is implied in the very names that designate the ministerial office—as pastors, or shepherds, teachers, bishops, or overseers. On the other hand, the impressiveness of sacerdotal assumption is checked and limited by the words, "In the Lord." The minister is to rule only in the Lord, recognising the joint union of himself and his Church with the Lord, and the principles and polity by which the Church of Christ is to be governed.

3. *To admonish.*—"And admonish you" (ver. 12). These words also qualify the nature of the rulership. It must not be a despotic lording it over God's heritage, issuing commands with absolute and arbitrary authority, and enforcing those commands, if not instantly obeyed, with terrifying anathemas. No; he is to rule by the force of moral suasion—by instruction, admonition, advice, warning. The verb means to put in mind. To gain obedience to the right, precept must be repeatedly enforced in all the varied forms of reproof, rebuke, and exhortation.

II. **The treatment due to the ministerial office.**—1. *An intelligent acknowledgment of its character.* Think of its divine appointment, its solemn responsibilities, its important work, its exhausting anxieties, its special perils. Whatever the ministers seem to you, they are the eyes of the Church and the mouth of God. Acknowledge them; sympathise with and help them; give credit to their message; they watch and pray; they study and take pains for your sake.

2. *A superlative, loving regard.*—"Esteem them very highly in love" (ver. 13). The adverb is particularly forcible, signifying super-exceedingly, more than exceedingly. There is a hint here to thousands in the Church at the present day, which it is hoped they will have the grace to act upon. The profound reverence and esteem to be shown to the ministerial office is to be regulated, not by fear, but by love. The hard-working, devoted, and faithful minister is worthy of all honour and affection.

3. *The true ground of this considerate treatment.*—"For their work's sake" (ver. 13). Love them for your own sake; you have life and comfort by them. Honour them for their office' sake; they are your fathers; they have begotten you in Christ; they are the stewards of God's house, and the dispensers of His mysteries. Honour and love them for God's sake; He has sent them and put His word in their mouth. To love a minister is not much, except his work be that which draws out affection. He who can say, "I love a minister because he teacheth me to know God, because he informs me of duty, and reproves my declensions and backslidings"—he is the man who has satisfaction in his love.

III. **An important exhortation.**—"And be at peace among yourselves" (ver. 13). Not simply be at peace with your pastor, but among yourselves. You are all the children of God. God is a God of peace. Discord, contention, and unquietness are fit only for the children of the devil. Live in godly unity as becometh the children of peace. This is a duty frequently enjoined (Heb. xii. 14; Jas. iii.; Ps. cxli.). Let there be peace especially between the minister and his flock—no rivalry between ministers, no disputings and contentions among the people. There can be no prosperity where peace is absent.

Lessons.—1. *The minister is accountable to God for his fidelity.* 2. *The people can never profit under the minister they have not learned to respect.* 3. *Peace is an essential condition of success in Christian work.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 12, 13. *A Public Ministry—*

I. **Is ordained by God.**—"Over you in the Lord."

II. **Has clearly defined duties.**—1. *To labour.* 2. *To govern.* 3. *To admonish.*

III. **Should be highly esteemed.**—"Esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake."

Ver. 13. "And be at peace among yourselves." *Church Concord—*

I. **Possible only where there is mutual peace.**

II. **It is the duty of every member of the Church to promote harmony.**

III. **Peace with God is the condition of peace with each other.**

IV. **Discord in a Church mars the usefulness of the best ministry.**

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

A Group of Christian Precepts.

The supernatural character of Christianity is not less apparent in the purity and loftiness of the morality it inculcates, than in the superiority of the truths it reveals. It is intensely practical in its teaching and aim. It is not like a glow of light that irradiates the external character for a time; it is an inward radiance that cannot help making itself visible in the outer life. It is not a sentiment; it is a principle. The moral precepts of Christianity can be appreciated and obeyed only by the soul that has become thoroughly possessed by the Christian spirit. Each precept in these verses may be fittingly used as the homiletical heading of a distinct paragraph.

I. **Warn them that are unruly.**—The unruly are those who, like disorderly soldiers, break their ranks, and become idle, dissolute, and worthless in their lives. This disorderliness was a besetting sin of the primitive Churches, not excepting the Thessalonian. Many of them, entertaining false ideas about the nearness of Christ's second coming, became indifferent to the ordinary work of life, and sank into listlessness and apathy, and even worse. Says the proverb, "An idle brain is the devil's workshop," and when a man is not diligently employed in some healthy and vigorous occupation, he is apt, notwithstanding his Christian profession, to become an instrument of evil and a disturber of the Church, the peace of which he is pledged to maintain. It is difficult to pin some people down to do a bit of fair and honest work. They are full of schemes and suggestions for other people to carry out; they lay down the line of conduct with the utmost precision, but never themselves illustrate the easiness or difficulty of keeping on the line; they make laws and regulations which they never dream of observing themselves, and are for ever finding fault that other people do not observe them. These are the restless gipsies of the Church, the pests of every Christian community into which they intrude, the mischief-makers and busybodies in other people's matters. Warn such. Admonish gently at first, putting them in mind of their duty. It is the fault of many to limit admonitions to gross and grievous sins; but in these cases warning often comes too late. If admonition in the earlier stage is not effectual, then proceed to sharper and more faithful reproof. If that is unavailing, hesitate not to take more summary measures—separate yourselves from their society.

II. **Comfort the feeble-minded.**—More correctly—encourage the faint-hearted. The reference is not to the intellectually weak, but to such as faint in the day of adversity, or are ready to fall away before the prospect of persecution and suffering (ii. 14), or who are disheartened and desponding in consequence of the loss of friends (iv. 13). It may also include those who are perplexed with

constant doubt and apprehension as to their spiritual condition, and who through fear are all their lifetime subject to bondage. There are some people so weighed down with a sense of modesty as to incapacitate them from using the abilities they certainly possess, though underneath all this modesty there may be the pride of thinking themselves better able to judge of themselves and their abilities than anybody else. Others, again, are so oppressed with the inveteracy of sin, that they despair of gaining the victory over it, and give up all endeavours. These need encouraging with the promises of God, and with the lessons and examples furnished by experience. Heart-courage is what the faint-hearted require.

III. **Support the weak.**—A man may be weak in judgment or weak in practice. There may be lack of information as to certain great truths necessary to be believed and stoutly maintained, or lack of capacity in clearly understanding and grasping those truths. Such was the condition of many in the apostle's day, who, not apprehending the complete abrogation of the Mosaic law, and thinking they were still conscientiously bound to observe ordinances, were weak in faith. Some linger for years in the misty borderland between doubt and certainty, with all its enfeebling and poisonous malaria—ever learning, but never coming to a knowledge of the truth. Defective faith implies defective practice. Support such with the moral influence of our sympathy, our prayers, our counsel, our example. While not countenancing their sins, we may bear or prop them up by judiciously commending in them that which is good, by not too severely condemning them in the practice of things indifferent (1 Cor. ix. 20), and by striving to rectify their errors with all gentleness and fidelity.

IV. **Be patient toward all men.**—Not only toward the weak, the faint-hearted, and the disorderly, but toward all men—the most wayward and perverse, the bitterest enemies and persecutors. Consider the patience of God towards ourselves, while for years we refused His calls and despised His admonitions; and let us strive to imitate His longsuffering and kindness. Lack of present success is no warrant to any to cease from obvious duties, and leave things to drift into hopeless entanglement and ruin. The triumphs of genius in art, science, and literature are triumphs of patience.

V. **See that none renders evil for evil unto any man.**—Retaliation betrays a weak, ignoble, and cruel disposition. Pagan morality went so far as to forbid only the unprovoked injuring of others, and it is not without noble examples of the exercise of a spirit of forgiveness.

> "Exalted Socrates, divinely brave,
> Injured he fell, and dying, he forgave;
> Too noble for revenge, which still we find
> The weakest frailty of a feeble mind."

The Jews prostituted to purposes of private revenge the laws which were intended to administer equitable retributions between man and man. It is Christianity alone that teaches man to bear personal injuries without retaliation. "Hath any wronged thee?" says Quarles; "be bravely avenged—slight it, and the work is begun; forgive it, and it is finished. He is below himself that is not above an injury." Public wrongs the public law will avenge; and the final recompense for all wrong, private and public, must be left to the infallible Judge of all (Rom. xii. 19, 20).

VI. **But ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves and to all men.**—The noblest retaliation is that of good for evil. In the worst character there is some element of goodness, that may call out the desire to do good towards it. Our beneficence should be as large as an enemy's malice (Matt. v. 44, 45). That which is good is not always that which is pleasing to the objects of our benevolence, nor is it always pleasing to ourselves. Goodness should be

sought for its own sake, and sought with increasing earnestness and perseverance, as the hunter seeks his prey. It is the great aim and business of life. Goodness is essentially diffusive; it delights in multiplying itself in others. It is undeterred by provocation; it conquers the most virulent opposition.

Lessons.—1. *The preceptive morality of Christianity is a signal evidence of its transcendent glory.* 2. *Practice is more potent than precept.* 3. *The Christian spirit is the root of genuine goodness.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 16—18.

The Secret of a Happy Life.

Happiness is not found in anything external. It is a certain state of the soul when it is filled with the peace of God and lit up with the sunshine of heaven. It is a mockery to talk about cultivating happiness. It is not a potato to be planted in mould, and tilled with manure. "Happiness is a glory shining far down upon us out of heaven. It is a divine dew which the soul, on certain of its summer mornings, feels dropping upon it from the amaranth bloom and golden fruitage of paradise." An aged divine once gave this advice to a newly married pair: "Don't try to be happy. Happiness is a shy nymph, and if you chase her, you will never catch her; but just go quietly on and do your duty, and she will come to you." In these verses we have revealed to us the secret of a happy life.

I. **The secret of a happy life is found in the constant and faithful discharge of Christian duties.**—1. *It is our duty continually to rejoice.* "Rejoice evermore" (ver. 16). To rejoice is not only a privilege, but a duty; the believer is as much obliged to rejoice as he is to believe. It seems a mockery to direct people to rejoice in the midst of a world of sin, sorrow, and death, and in a Church which is sorely tried; and yet such was the condition of things when these words were penned, and when similar counsel was given to the Philippians (iv. 4). Religion is never recommended by sour looks, sepulchral tones, and suppressing every external manifestation of gladness. No wonder the Christian is able to rejoice continually, when we remember the inexhaustible sources of joy he possesses in his relations to Christ, to God, and to the Holy Ghost, in the promises of the divine word, and in a loving, beneficent, and holy life. By becoming religious, a man does not lose his joys, but exchanges them—transitory, fading, earthly joys—for joy unspeakable, glorious, and that fadeth not away.

2. *It is our duty to pray always.*—"Pray without ceasing" (ver. 17). As we are every moment in need, so should we every moment seek help in prayer. The Lord requires not only frequency in prayer, but also unwearied importunity. We must guard against the error of the Euchites, who flourished in the fourth century, and who regarded all other exercises of religion than inward prayer as unnecessary and vain. Live in the spirit of prayer. Let the whole work of life be as prayer offered to God. He who prays the most lives the best. Prayer surrounds the soul with a golden atmosphere, through which is sifted the sunbeams of heavenly joy.

3. *It is our duty to be ever grateful.*—"In everything give thanks" (ver. 18). Prayer should ever be accompanied with thanksgiving. What we may pray for, for that we must give thanks; and whatever is unfit matter for prayer is unfit for thanksgiving. The Christian can meet with nothing in the way of duty that is not a cause for thankfulness, whatever suffering may be entailed. When we think of the ceaseless stream of God's mercies, we shall have ample reasons for unintermitted thanksgiving.

II. **The secret of a happy life is in harmony with the divine will.**—"For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (ver. 18). It is the will of God that His people should be rejoicing, praying, and grateful; and this will is revealed by Christ, as declared in His gospel, as received in His Church, and as observed by those in communion with Him. What a revelation is this, not of an arbitrary demand of the impossible state of the affections towards God, but a beautiful and consolatory discovery of the largeness of His love and of the blessed ends for which He has redeemed us in Christ. The will of God supplies constant material for gratitude and praise.

Lessons.—*Learn the three indubitable marks of a genuine Christian:* 1. *To rejoice in the mercy of God.* 2. *To be fervent in prayer.* 3. *To give thanks to God in all things.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 16. *Rejoice Evermore.*

I. **In the exercise of faith.**—1. *In the truths of God.* 2. *In the promises of God.*

II. **In the practice of Christian hope.**

III. **In performing the duty of charity.**—*Barrow.*

Ver. 17. *On Self-recollectedness and Ejaculatory Prayer.*

I. **Mental prayer consists in gathering up the mind from its wanderings, and placing it consciously in the presence of God.**

II. **In breathing out the mind towards God.**

III. **Materials for ejaculatory prayer.**—1. *Found in daily portions of Scripture.* 2. *Stated prayer cannot be dispensed with even where ejaculatory prayer is practised.* 3. *Ejaculatory prayer helpful in striving after a life of sanctity.*—*E. M. Goulburn.*

Ver. 18. *The Perpetual Thanksgiving of a Christian Life.*

I. **Its difficulty.**—1. *From our fancied knowledge of life.* 2. *From our unbelieving distrust of God.*

II. **Its motive.**—God's will is so revealed in Christ, that, believing in it, we can give thanks in all things. 1. *Life the perpetual providence of a Father.* 2. *That perpetual providence is a discipline of human character.* 3. *The discipline of life is explained by eternity alone.*

III. **Its attainment.**—It is the gradual result of a life of earnest fellowship with God.—*E. L. Hull.*

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

Varied Aspects of Spiritual Influence.

In the natural world the greater law of distribution is manifested in the infinite variety that appears in the midst of an unchanging and inflexible uniformity. And in the Church of God what varied gifts, graces, and attainments are found in its members. No two are precisely alike. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and the multiplicity and variety of endowments are intended to be exercised for one grand and definite purpose (Eph. iv. 12, 13). By grouping together the precepts contained in these verses we have suggested to us the varied aspects of spiritual influence. Observe:—

I. **The fervency of spiritual influence.**—1. *The influence of the Spirit is represented under the emblem of fire.* "Quench not the Spirit" (ver. 19). Fire purifies the gold of its dross, enlightens by its splendour the eyes of the beholder, and raises the temperature of the Christian life. The person inspired is borne along, as it were, with spiritual ardour (Acts xviii. 25; Rom. xii. 11). Timothy is directed to rekindle or keep up the fire (2 Tim. i. 6). Christian baptism is

baptism "with the Holy Ghost and with fire" (Matt. iv. 11). The descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost was in tongues of fire (Acts ii. 3). The Spirit, as fire, bestows both the light of knowledge and the fervour of love.

2. *The influence of the Spirit may be quenched by denying the personality and Godhead of the Spirit,* by depreciating the necessity of and restraining the fervour of His presence in Christian work; by ignoring special reference to Him in prayer; by stifling the voice of conscience; by neglect of religious ordinances; by conformity to the world; by unsanctified use of past afflictions. The gifts of the Spirit, with all His holy operations, must be fervently and diligently cherished within us.

II. **The instructiveness of spiritual influence.**—"Despise not prophesyings" (ver. 20). The word "prophesying" in the New Testament signifies not only the prediction of future events, but the instructions of men inspired by the Holy Ghost, teaching Christian doctrines, revealing or explaining mysteries, exhorting to duties, consoling the sorrowing and afflicted. It is what we understand by preaching. It is not so much the prediction of events that are future, as it is the proclamation of duty that is instant. However exalted the believer may be in spiritual experience, however rich in faith and charity, it is still his duty to attend to preaching. "Despise not prophesying." Like many a negative in the Bible, it means a very decided positive in the opposite direction. Despise it not by exalting reason above revelation. Despise it not by identifying true religion with the weakness, oddities, and eccentric notions of good but ignorant men. Despise it not by denying its beneficent teachings, spurning its wise counsels, and neglecting its faithful warnings. Where there is no prophecy the people perish. He that despiseth it shall be despised of the Lord; he shall be cast into darkness, because he would not delight in the light (Acts xiii. 41; Prov. i. 24-31).

III. **The possible abuse of spiritual influence.**—"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (ver. 21). Error is never so dangerous as when it is the alloy of truth. Pure error is seen through at once and rejected; but error mixed with truth makes use of the truth as a pioneer for it, and gets introduction where otherwise it would have none. Poison is all the more dangerous when mixed up with food—error is never so likely to do mischief as when it comes to us under the pretensions and patronage of that which is true. Hence the importance of testing every pretender to spiritual illumination—as the goldsmith tests the gold and discovers the amount of alloy in it. "Beloved," says St. John, "believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." There are certain fundamental truths that are beyond all necessity of testing, and which transcend the powers of human reason to fully comprehend. The direction is addressed to the Church, to those who possess the Spirit by whose help the test is applied. The utterances of the Spirit may be tested in their relation to the glory of Jesus, and by the influence of the truths uttered upon the moral and spiritual life of the teacher and his followers. Having proved the truth, hold fast that which is good, as with both hands and against all who would forcibly wrest it from you. When you have tried and found out the truth, be constant and settled in it. A wavering-minded man is unstable in all his ways:—

> "Seize upon truth wherever 'tis found,
> Among her friends, among her foes,
> On Christian or on heathen ground,
> The flower's divine where'er it grows—
> Refuse the prickles and assume the rose."

IV. **The sensitiveness of spiritual influence.**—"Abstain from all appearance of evil" (ver. 22). Nothing will sooner quench the fire of the Spirit in the believer than sin. Therefore is he exhorted to abstain, to hold aloof from every species

of evil; not only from that which is really and in itself evil, but also from that which has the shape or semblance of evil. Not what we are, but what we appear, determines the world's judgment of us. Our usefulness in the world is very much dependent on appearances. Our abhorrence of evil, both in doctrine and practice, must be so decided as to avoid the very show of it in either. He makes conscience of no sin that makes not conscience of all; and he is in danger of the greatest who allows himself in the least. "By shunning evil things," says Bernard, "we provide for conscience; by avoiding ill, shows we safeguard our fame." The believer has need of a sound judgment, a sensitive conscience, and an ever-wakeful vigilance. To sanction evil in any form is to dim the lustre and stifle the operation of spiritual influence. "Know nought but truth, feel nought but love, will nought but bliss, do nought but righteousness. All things are known in heaven ere aimed at on earth."

Lessons.—1. *The mightiest influence in the universe is spiritual.* 2. *Increase of spiritual influence is dependent on uprightness of life.* 3. *The best spiritual gifts should be eagerly sought.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 19. *Quench not the Spirit.*

I. **The mode of the Spirit's operation is likened unto that of fire.**—1. *Fire of unrest.* When the Spirit convinces of sin. 2. *Fire of purification.* When the Spirit burns up evil within. 3. *Fire of consecration.* When the Spirit dwells within as a mighty impelling force.

II. **It is in our power to quench the Holy Fire.**

III. **The ways in which men quench the Spirit.**—1. *By continuing in known sin.* 2. *By indulging in a light, frivolous spirit.* 3. *By refusing to believe in anything they cannot see or touch.* 4. *By allowing worldly affairs to absorb the affections.* 5. *By neglecting religious duties.* 6. *By not exercising the gifts already bestowed.*—*Local Preacher's Treasury.*

Ver. 20. *Despise not Prophesyings*—

I. **Because they are the sayings of God.**

II. **They are the grand appointed means of our salvation.**

III. **Because we greatly need them.**

IV. **We grieve the Spirit of God thereby.**

V. **It is the sure way of contracting a habit of despising divine things in general.**

VI. **It lays stumbling-blocks in the way of others.**

VII. **Those who despise destroy themselves.**—*E. Hare.*

Abuse of Public Worship.

I. **The offence.**—1. *Habitual neglect of public worship.* 2. *Attendance on public worship in an improper state of mind.* 3. *Failure to improve public worship for the purposes for which it is intended.*

II. **Its sin and danger.**—1. *It involves contempt of the authority of God.* 2. *It involves contempt of an institution with which God has specially identified Himself.* 3. *It involves contempt of one of the appointed means of grace.* 4. *It involves contempt of our own soul.*—*G. Brooks.*

Ver. 21. *Rationalism.*

I. **Prove all things.**—1. *Our own sentiments.* 2. *The sentiments of others.*

II. **Hold fast that which is good.**—1. *Against the assaults of proud reason.* 2. *Against the assaults of mad passions.* 3. *Against the assaults of a menacing world.*—*Ibid.*

Prove all Things.

I. **The course of conduct commanded.**—"Prove." 1. *By an appeal to the word of God as supreme.* 2. *Sincerely.* 3. *Thoroughly.* 4. *Prayerfully.*

II. **The extent to which the course of conduct is to be carried.**—"All things."

1. *Things taken for granted to be right.* 2. *Things wrong.* 3. *Things doubtful.*

III. **Some hindrances to the adoption of this course.**—1. *Dislike to the trouble it may cause.* 2. *Fear of the demands which the result may make.*

IV. **Blessings likely to result from this course.**—1. *Activity of mind in matters of religion.* 2. *A specific acquaintance with the word of God.* 3. *Legitimate independence of thought.* 4. *Increasing strength of Christian character.* 5. *Increase of Christian sagacity.* 6. *The adorning of the Christian doctrine in the eyes of men.*—*J. Holmes.*

Hold Fast that which is Good.

I. **Be well assured of the value and goodness of the possession.**

II. **Cherish a deep sense of responsibility because you have been led to prove and to be convinced of the good.**

III. **Be assured that powerful influences will be exerted that you may lose your hold.**

IV. **Do not allow your convictions of its goodness to be unsettled.**

V. **Do not take hold of anything which you cannot hold at the same time that you firmly grasp this.**

VI. **Do not let a little of it go.**

VII. **Hold it more firmly.**

VIII. **Regard how others have been affected by the way they have held.**

IX. **Depend entirely on the grace of God to enable you to do this.**—*Ibid.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 23, 24.

A Prayer for Sanctification.

Sanctification is the supreme end of the Christian life, and everything should be made to contribute to the grand result. It is the crown and ornament of all other graces, the perfecting of every moral virtue. The fact that man is capable of so lofty a degree of personal holiness indicates that it is the supreme end for which he ought to live. He misses the glory that is within his reach if he does not attain to it. Sanctification in its radical meaning is simply separation—a separation from what is evil to what is good. It then implies to make holy that which is unholy. It begins in a moral transformation, the regeneration of the heart, and advances to perfection. Observe:—

I. **That sanctification is a complete work.**—"Sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless" (ver. 23).

1. *It affects the intellectual nature of man.*—"Your spirit." It is this that distinguishes truth from falsehood and apprehends the mysteries of religion. If the intellect is sanctified, there is less danger of falling into error and heresy. Enlightened by the Holy Ghost, it enables man to prove all things and to test and judge every aspect of truth.

2. *It affects the spiritual nature of man.*—"Your soul"—the seat of the affections and will, the passions and appetites. The having the heart in a right or wrong condition makes the difference between the moral and the immoral character. When the heart is sanctified the passions and appetites are kept within due bounds, and the believer is preserved pure from the sinful lusts of the flesh. The same distinction between spirit and soul is made in Heb. iv. 12; and in Tit. i. 15 a distinction is made between the intellectual and moral in the terms *mind* and *conscience.*

3. *It affects the physical nature of man.*—"Your body." The body is the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. iv. 19), and must be kept pure and blameless—must be kept in temperance, soberness, and chastity; to pollute it with fleshly lusts is to pollute and destroy it (1 Cor. iii. 17). The body, immortalised and glorified, will be the companion of the glorified soul throughout eternity; and the Thessalonians had already been assured that the body was to rise from the grave

(iv. 16). The whole complex nature of man is to be purified. Mere outward decency of conduct is not enough; the inner man, the intellectual, moral, and spiritual faculties must be kept in a state of purity and holiness. He hath sanctity in no part who is not sanctified in every part.

4. *It is a necessary fitness to meet Christ at His coming.*—"Be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 23). It is the power of God only that can keep man holy, though the utmost circumspection and vigilance are to be exercised on his part. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God"—see Him now as the inner eye of the soul is clarified, and see Him at His coming in power and great glory.

II. **That sanctification is a divine work.**—1. *The believer is called to sanctification by the God of unswerving fidelity.* "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it" (ver. 24). God is faithful to all His promises of help. Every promise is backed by the whole force of His omnipotence—"who also will do it." There is nothing greater in the universe than the will of God; it actuates His power and ensures His faithfulness. Entire sanctification is therefore no impossible attainment. God calls, not to mock and disappoint, but to bless.

2. *The believer is called to sanctification by the God of peace.*—"The very God of peace sanctify you" (ver. 23). Peace and sanctification are inseparable; without holiness there can be no peace. God is the author and giver of peace, and delights in peace. Mr. Howels, of Long Acre chapel, used to say that if he saw two dogs at peace with each other, he saw there "the very God of peace"; that one atom of peace left in a world of war with God is a trace of the lingering mercy and favouring goodness of God. Peace is a reflection of the divine presence on earth. The Thessalonians had been enjoined to cultivate mutual peace and harmony (ver. 13), and personal holiness had been earnestly recommended (iv. 3). They are now taught where peace and holiness are to be found. Both are gifts of God. We have need of peace—peace of conscience, peace from the rage and fury of the world, peace and love among those who are of the household of God.

III. **That sanctification is obtained by prayer.**—The loftiest duty is possible with grace; the least is all but impossible without it. All grace must be sought of God in prayer. The virtue and power of all exhortation and teaching depend on the divine blessing. What God encourages us to seek in prayer is possible of attainment in actual experience. Prayer is the expression of wants we feel. It is the power by which we reach the highest spiritual excellence.

Lessons.—1. *Cherish the highest ideal of the Christian character.* 2. *Pray for divine help in its attainment.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 23. *The Sanctification of the Complete Man.*

I. **Its meaning.**—1. *There is a great trinity of powers—body, soul, and spirit—linking man with three different worlds.* The physical, the intellectual, the spiritual. 2. *These three ranges of powers become gateways of temptation from three different worlds, and unless they are all consecrated we are never free from danger.*

II. **Its attainment.**—1. *We cannot consecrate ourselves.* 2. *God preserves the entire sanctification by imparting peace.*

III. **The motive for endeavouring to attain it.**—"Until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1. *A day of manifestation when the shadows and unrealities of time will fade in the full morning of eternity.* 2. *A day of everlasting gatherings.*—*E. L. Hull.*

The Trinity.

I. **The first power or consciousness**

in which God is made known to us is as the Father, the author of our being.

II. **The second way through which the personality and consciousness of God has been revealed to us is as the Son.**

III. **A closer and a more enduring relation in which God stands to us is the relation of the Spirit**—It is the graces of the Spirit which harmonise the man and make him one; and that is the end, aim, and object of all the gospel.—*F. W. Robertson.*

Ver. 24. *The Faith of Man and the Faithfulness of God.*

I. **The highest object of man's existence is to hold communion with his God.**

II. **Rightly to believe in Christ is to know and feel this communion.**

III. **The unalterable faithfulness of God is a fidelity to His own gracious engagement.**

IV. **The prominent character of God is unshaken stability.**

V. **God is faithful to His warnings as He is to His promises.**—*A. Butler.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 25—28.

Closing Words.

I. **An important request.**—"Brethren, pray for us" (ver. 25). The most gifted saints have need of the prayers of God's people. The great apostle, much as he prayed for himself, did not himself feel independent of the intercessions of others. His large experience of the power of prayer made him only the more anxious to strengthen his personal interest at the throne of grace. The least gifted saint in other respects may be mighty in prayer. Believers are so bound together as to be dependent on one another, and all on the great Head of the Church. The richest inheritance of the anxious minister are the prayers of his people. A praying Church will never have to complain of an insipid and fruitless ministry.

II. **A Christian salutation.**—"Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss" (ver. 26). The "kiss of charity" in those days was a token of friendship and goodwill, something equivalent to the shaking of hands in modern times. In the Syrian Church, before communion, each takes his neighbour's right hand, and gives the salutation, "Peace!" The greeting was "a holy kiss"—pure and chaste, such as one Christian may give to another, and not sin. Christianity is the soul of courtesy. "Forms may change; but the same spirit of brotherly love and cordial recognition of one another, under whatever diversities of temporal circumstances, should ever characterise those who know the love of a common Saviour, and have entered into the communion of saints" (*Lillie*). Let the love of the heart toward all the brethren be practically manifested in becoming acts of courtesy and goodwill.

III. **A solemn direction.**—"I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren" (ver. 27). This first epistle to the Thessalonians is, in point of time, the earliest of all the canonical books of the New Testament; and here is a solemn injunction that it be publicly read to all the people. The Romish Church, if she does not deny, very unwillingly allows the reading of Scripture by the laity. "What Rome forbids under an anathema," says Bengel, "St. Paul enjoins with an adjuration." None should be debarred from reading or hearing the word of God. "Women and children are not to be excluded" (Deut. xxxi. 12; Josh. viii. 34, 35). Lois and Eunice knew the Bible, and taught it to the child Timothy. The Berœans had free access to the sacred volume, and searched it at their pleasure. The public reading of the Holy Scriptures is an important means of edifying the Church; it is enforced by apostolic authority; it familiarises the mind with the greatest truths; it keeps alive the enthusiasm of the Church for aggressive purposes.

IV. **A gracious benediction.**—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen" (ver. 28). The epistle closes, as it began, with blessing. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is the fountain of all the good that has flowed in upon and enriched the human race. The three great features of that grace—pardon, peace, holiness—are clearly elucidated in this epistle. The fountain is inexhaustible. Its streams of blessing are ever available for needy, perishing man.

Lessons.—1. *Prayer is an ever-present duty.* 2. *Christianity hallows all the true courtesies of life.* 3. *The word of God should be constantly read and studied.* 4. *The best blessings issue from the inexhaustible grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 25. *Pray for Us.*

I. **We greatly need your prayers.**—Our state, like yours, is a state of probation. We have uncommon wants. We have a strict account to give.

II. **We request your prayers.**—1. *You can pray.* 2. *God will hear you.*

III. **We may reasonably expect that you will pray for us.**—1. *We pray for you.* 2. *We are labouring for your advantage.*

IV. **We are warranted to expect it from your own professions.**—1. *You profess a high degree, not only of respect, but of love to your preachers.* 2. *Some of you can scarcely give us any other proof of it.*

V. **It will be to your advantage to pray for us.**—1. *It will prepare your minds for hearing us.* 2. *This will make us useful to you.*

VI. **Your prayers will make us more useful to others.**

Ver. 27. *The Public Reading of the Scriptures.*

I. **To debar the Lord's people from acquainting themselves with Scripture is a great sin.**—Scripture should be translated into the native tongue of every nation where Christ has a Church, that people may read it, hear it, and be acquainted with it. They ought diligently to improve all helps to acquaint them with the mind of God revealed in Scripture, and look upon their doing so as a duty of greatest importance and weight.

II. **Ministers and Church guides should see that the people of their charge be acquainted with Scripture.**—Should invite them to read it in secret and in their families, and use their influence that children of both sexes be trained up at schools to read the Lord's words distinctly in their own native language.

III. **Scripture should be publicly read to God's people assembled together for His worship.**—Even though not immediately expounded and applied, the reading of God's word allows it to speak for itself and impress its own divine authority.—*Fergusson.*

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

INTRODUCTION.

Occasion and design.—Probably little more time elapsed between the two epistles than was necessary for the messenger of Paul to return to him. This appears likely from the fact that Silvanus and Timothy were still with Paul, at Corinth, as when the first letter was sent. The condition of the Church at Thessalonica had meanwhile grown more trying, the flame of persecution burnt more fiercely, and the conviction that this presaged the immediate appearance of the Lord from heaven grew stronger. "Religious effervescence had come to a sort of paroxysm; an ever-increasing number of Christians gave up all their worldly concerns and duties for the sake of living a life of contemplation, inquisitive idleness, and begging. In order, therefore, to abate the intensity of this carnal rather than spiritual flame the apostle is obliged to make use of all the means at his disposal, and the two principal of these are instruction and discipline" (*Godet*).

The design of the epistle is heard in the phrase, "that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind nor yet be troubled . . . as that the day of the Lord is immediately impending."

Style and character of the epistle.—In style these two epistles to Thessalonica are alike. We need not expect the style in which St. Paul writes to the Churches which had become faithless—then his language defies style—nor of that to those whose edification in the doctrines of the Christian faith is his aim. There is much in common between these letters and that to the other Macedonian Church. "They are neither passionate, nor argumentative; but practical, consolatory, prompted by affection, by memory and hope. Hence they represent, as it has been aptly said, 'St. Paul's normal style,' the way in which he would commonly write and talk to his friends" (*Findlay*).

In their character, they are (1) the letters of a missionary, (2) singularly

affectionate letters, (3) especially cheering and consolatory letters, and (4) eschatological letters, *i.e.* they set forth the last things in Christian doctrine" (*Ibid*).

Outline of the Epistle.

i. 1, 2. Greeting.
3–12—ii. 13–17. The thanksgiving, with exhortations and prayers.
ii. 1—12. The doctrinal section: the Man of Sin.
iii. 1—16. The practical section, with messages, concluded with prayer.
17, 18. Autographic conclusion and benediction (*Farrar*)

CHAPTER I.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 3. **We are bound to thank God.**—We owe a debt of gratitude to God. It is not so much what is seemly that comes into prominence here, as what is due. **Even as it is meet.**—The word for "meet" directs attention to the value of the increase of the faith of the Thessalonians. As though the apostle said, "It is something worth giving thanks for." **Your faith groweth exceedingly.**—The word for "groweth exceedingly" does not occur again in the New Testament. It means "to increase beyond measure." The faith of the Thessalonians was like "a fruitful bough by a fountain whose branches run over the wall," though "the archers have sorely grieved it, and shot at it and persecuted it" (Gen. xlix. 22, 23). **The charity of every one of you toward each other aboundeth.**—This is high praise indeed—a plethora of love. Like a brimming fountain kept always full, so the love of these early Christians overflowed. Cf. on 1 Thess. iv. 9.

Ver. 4. **We ourselves glory in you.**—St. Paul had to rebuke the Corinthians for the factious spirit which set off the excellencies of one teacher against those of another. Here he plays off one Church against another, as a schoolmaster might seek to stir up his pupils by mentioning the names of those who have taken scholarships. But St. Paul well knew that this needed care (see Col. iii. 21; R.V. or Greek).

Ver. 5. **Which is a manifest token.**—"An *indication.*" The steadfast and resolute continuance in the profession and adornment of the Christian faith, in face of opposition, might suggest to persecutors, as to Gamaliel, the possibility of the divine origin of the faith, to oppose which was to fight against God.

Ver. 6. **Seeing it is a righteous thing.**—"There is no unrighteousness in Him." However stern the retribution, none who suffers will ever be able to impugn the justice. **To recompense tribulation to them that trouble you.**—The R.V. comes nearer to the original, "affliction to them that afflict you." This *lex talionis* is a sword that is dangerous to any hand but His who said, "Vengeance is Mine; I will repay."

Ver. 7. **And to you who are troubled rest with us.**—The idea suggested by the words is that of poor, hunted fugitives with nerves tensely strung and a wild look of fear in the eyes. As the guardians of the infant Jesus were assured of safety by the death of him who sought the child's life, so the strain of fear shall be relaxed in the case of the persecuted Thessalonians.

Ver. 8. **In flaming fire.**—Lit. "in a fire of flame." "Fire is a symbol of divine anger and majesty in Scripture; and flame is fire in motion, leaping and blazing out" (*Findlay*). **Taking vengeance on them that know not God.**—St. Paul does not consider ignorance as a valid excuse where knowledge might be had, any more than a man would be looked on as innocent who should plead that, being a foreigner, he did not know that the law of any country which he visits forbids murder. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John iii. 19).

Ver. 9. **Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction.**—R.V. "who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction." It has been repeatedly shown that only arbitrariness can limit the meaning of this terrible phrase. Our comfort must be that He with whom "it is a righteous thing to recompense affliction" will always be self-consistent. **From the presence of the Lord.** The fulness of joy is there, and they who, like Cain, go out from it carry the ache of an irreparable loss with them. The Hebraism in the phrase is brought out by the R.V. "from the face of the Lord."

Ver. 10. **To be glorified in His saints.**—Two meanings at least suit this phrase: (1) It may be the apostle thought of the great ascription of praise rising from the vast assembly of saints, or (2) it may be he is thinking of the saints as the trophies of the

Redeemer's love and power—the work that speaks the Master's praise. **And to be admired.** —R.V. "marvelled at." The same work describes the fawning sycophancy of men of the Balaam spirit, or it might describe the open-eyed and speechless wonder of an African chief in a State function.

Ver. 11. **And fulfil all the good pleasure.**—R.V. "every desire of goodness." "As much as to say, May God mightily accomplish in you all that goodness would desire and that faith can effect" (*Findlay*).

Ver. 12. **That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you.**—A little mirror may not increase the sum-total of sunlight, but it may cause some otherwise unobservant eye to note its brightness. So Christ's infinite and eternal glory cannot be augmented but only shared by Christians (John xvii. 22).

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

Phases of Apostolic Greeting.

Under this heading we have already treated homiletically the apostle's formula of salutation, which is the same here as at the beginning of the first epistle.

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

Congratulatory Features of a Prosperous Church.

We have here a suggestive example of the apostolic method of dealing with a Church in which the incipient elements of error were beginning to operate. He applauds first what is really good, and then faithfully, almost fiercely, warns of the threatening evil. He who would effectually rebuke must first learn how to tenderly sympathise. These verses indicate what are the congratulatory features of a prosperous Church.

I. **There is a vital and progressive faith.**—"Your faith groweth exceedingly" (ver. 3). Faith feeds on truth; and all truth leads to and unites with God, its source. A living faith can only be sustained by a living truth; and where there is life there will be growth. We are ruled by our beliefs; if they are wrong, our track is wrong, our life a mistake, our energies wasted. The faith of the Thessalonians was so real, so vivid, so vitalising, so deeply rooted in the quickening soil of gospel truth, that it flourished with tropical luxuriance. The doom of a Church is sealed when its faith is dead and its creed inert. It is like a fossil in the grasp of a fossil—a museum of dry, bony, musty remains.

II. **There is a reciprocal and expansive charity.**—"And the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth" (ver. 3). Love is the fruit of the Christian spirit, and the proof of its genuineness. It should be manifested to every believer in Christ. The love of a common Saviour and the sharing in a common suffering tend to intensify mutual esteem and affection. The prayer of the apostle on behalf of the Thessalonians was fulfilled (1 Thess. iii. 12) —an encouragement to pray on behalf of others. Where charity abounds there is mutual forbearance with one another's faults and frailties, the absence of suspicion and jealousy, no tendency to pass harsh and rapid judgments on the conduct of others, a disposition to think the best of each other, to share each other's trials, and bear each other's burdens.

III. **There is a patient fidelity under suffering.**—"Your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure" (ver. 4). These trials began with the first planting of the gospel in Thessalonica, and seemed to have continued without cessation. The Jews were the principal agents and instigators stirring up the populace against the Christians, and rousing the suspicions of the magistrates who were specially jealous of religious innovations (Acts xvii. 5-8). Their faith made them patient and uncomplaining under the pressure of affliction; they believed the gospel was still the power of God unto salvation, though their

profession of it brought on them sorrow and suffering. The former warnings and teachings of the apostle were not in vain; their faith triumphed over persecution. Suffering is the opportunity for patience and the test of faith. Troubles come not alone, but are like chain-shot, or like the billows of the sea, linked one to another, each succeeding blow being more destructive than the other. Patience without faith is simply dull, stupid, stoical endurance. It is faith that renders the soul invincible and triumphant.

IV. **There is ample ground for apostolic gratitude and commendation.**—"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet; . . . so that we ourselves glory in you in the Churches of God" (vers. 3, 4). Even the enemies of the Church are sometimes constrained to admire and applaud the spirit of harmony, the affection and enterprise which characterise its members. It is also encouraging to have the approbation and good word of the ministers of God, especially of those who have been instrumental in converting men to the truth; but no Church could command the respect of the good if it did not first secure the smile and blessing of God. The apostle thanks God as the great Giver of all the grace which he rejoices to see has done so much for the Thessalonians. God had wrought this work of faith and love and patience in their hearts, and He would make it prosper and increase. He had put this fire in them, and would make it burn; He had laid this leaven in the dough or meal of their hearts, and He would make it heave and work till the whole was leavened. The apostle felt it at once his duty and joy to thank God on their behalf and to boast of their attainments to others. "We are bound to thank God always for you, as it is meet; . . . we ourselves glory in you in the Churches of God." It is a noble, Christ-like spirit to sympathise with the sufferings and rejoice in the prosperities of the Church. A cheery word, a simple, hearty prayer, an act of sympathy and kindness, will do much to animate and encourage the struggling people of God. One lively Church is the means of rousing the zeal and emulation of others.

Lessons.—1. *Vigorous Church-life is the result of an intelligent and active faith in the truth.* 2. *Suffering is no sign of the divine displeasure, but often a means of spiritual prosperity.* 3. *Those who rejoice in the success of the Church are most likely to share in the blessings of that success.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 3. *Growth in Grace.*

I. **Evidences of growth.**—1. *Taking increasing pleasure in God's word.* 2. *A growing attachment to the doctrines of Christ.* 3. *Increasing acquaintance with the mind of God.* 4. *In love one to another for the truth's sake.*

II. **Importance of growth.**—1. *Brings glory to God.* 2. *Influences the ministry of the word.* 3. *Not to grow, our religion declines and becomes doubtful.*—*Sketches.*

Ver. 4. *Christian Fidelity*—

I. **Is severely tested by tribulations.**

II. **Is a stimulating example to others.**

III. **Is a theme of grateful boasting.**

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

The Recompense of Suffering for the Truth.

It is not an uncommon spectacle to see vice prosperous and triumphant, while virtue is ignored and oppressed. To a superficial observer it would seem that all the great prizes of the world—wealth, power, social status, gaiety, display, pleasure—were thrown indiscriminately and with lavish abundance into the lap of the wicked, and that the God-fearing few are left in obscurity to struggle with

hardships, penury, and affliction. Nor is it always an easy matter to reconcile the sufferings of the good with the goodness and justice of God. But all things come round to the patient man. We must look to the future for the faithful redress of present grievances. In this chapter the apostle ministers consolation to the suffering Thessalonians by assuring them of a coming day in which they would be abundantly recompensed for all they had to endure, and in which the righteousness of God would be publicly vindicated. Observe:—

I. **That the maintenance of the truth often entails considerable suffering.**—"The kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer" (ver. 5). They who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. The world is violently opposed to the Church, and that opposition is full of malignant hatred and cruelty. Socrates once said something like this—that if goodness were to become incarnate in one man, so that that man would be perfectly good, the world would put him to death. What Socrates said was realised in Christ. "If they have persecuted Me," said Christ to His followers, "they will also persecute you." It is not the least among the trials of the good that they are obliged to come in contact with evil in so many forms, and that they are so savagely assailed and oppressed with it. Athanasius regarded the suffering of persecution to be a special note of a Christian man, observing: "It is the part of Christians to be persecuted; but to persecute the Christians is the very office of Pilate and Caiaphas."

II. **That suffering for the truth has a morally educating influence.**—"That ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God" (ver. 5). The believer has no worthiness in himself, nor can he acquire any by the merit of his own works. This worthiness is but another word for .meetness—that meetness of state and character, as sinners justified and sanctified, without which no man shall enter the kingdom. Only to such has the kingdom been promised. And the sufferings they endure on behalf of the kingdom, so far from impairing their title, serve rather to confirm and illustrate it. Every Christian grace is tested, developed, and trained by suffering. "The least reproach augments our glory. Every tear is not only noted and kept in the bottle, but made as varnish to add to our brightness and glorious splendour. No drop of our blood but wins us a river of glory; effusion of it the whole ocean of beatitude." When Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, was cast to the lions, he exclaimed: "I am God's wheat, and must be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts that I may be found His pure bread."

III. **That suffering for the truth will be divinely recompensed.**—"Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God" (ver. 5)—*i.e.* their sufferings and the constancy with which they endured them proved God's justice. A strange assertion! The people of God have often been staggered by the fact that the wicked persecute and prosper, and the poor saints are plagued and oppressed (Ps. lxxiii. 1-14; Jer. xii. 1-4). But from this very fact the apostle derives consolation. It is a proof to him of a future state in which all this apparent inconsistency will be set right, in which the saint and the persecutor will each receive his own proper recompense.

1. *Suffering will be divinely recompensed in the deliverance of the sufferer.*—"And to you who are troubled rest with us" (ver. 7). The word "rest" really means *the slackening of strings that had been pulled tight.* To the persecuted and afflicted Thessalonians the happiness of heaven is held out under the image of rest and relief after suffering. It is, as it were, the relaxing of tension after having been stretched on the rack. The keenest suffering for the truth is limited in its duration; and the righteousness of God is pledged to sustain and deliver His afflicted ones. The sweet rest of heaven will be all the more enjoyable because shared with those who have passed through a similar conflict.

2. *Suffering will be divinely recompensed in the punishment of the persecutor.*—

"Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you" (ver. 6). The punishment of the persecutor is as just as the relief of the oppressed; and God has both the intention and the power of accomplishing what He thinks just. The law of retaliation will be rigidly enforced. The very measure the persecutors have dealt they are to receive back again; and the retaliation will be all the more terrible because of its unanswerable justice. Truth must triumph over all its enemies. Its watchword is "no surrender." The apostate Julian spent his strength in trying to destroy the true Church; but when he fell on the battle-field, as the blood was gushing from his breast and his eyes were closing in death, he hissed between his setting teeth, "Galilean, Thou hast conquered!" And the Galilean must and will conquer, and all His enemies shall receive their just measure of punishment.

Lessons.—1. *The sufferings of the good afford an opportunity for the display of divine justice.* 2. *Suffering is no evidence of the divine displeasure.* 3. *The glory of the future will infinitely outweigh the sufferings of the present life.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 6, 7. *Rest in Heaven for the Troubled.*

I. **Our Lord's coming is called a revealing of Him.**—Here He is revealed in the outer world and in the gospel. There He will be revealed in glory, without disguise or veil.

II. **Look at the troublers and their portion.**—"It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you." Sorrow of the acutest kind without comfort or alleviation.

III. **Look at the portion of the troubled.**—"Rest." A heaven of quietness and repose, and yet of ceaseless and tireless activity in praising God.

IV. **The righteousness of the divine conduct.**—"It is a righteous thing with God." The Lord's second coming is not on an errand of mercy; His main business is to dispense justice.—*C. Bradley.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 7—10.

The Day of Judgment.

The apostle sought to comfort the persecuted and suffering Church at Thessalonica by assuring them of a coming day of recompense, in which the divine righteousness would be satisfactorily cleared, His enemies punished, and His people rewarded. He now proceeds to depict the startling scenes of that promised day—"that day for which all other days were made"—and to indicate the twofold aspect of severity and mercy which will characterise the awards of the great Judge. In dealing with a subject of such overwhelming import, and which affords such scope for the play of the most powerful imagination, special care should be taken to keep within the limits of the revealed word. These verses suggest:—

I. **That the day of judgment will be ushered in with awful splendour.**—1. *The person of the Judge will be clothed with dazzling brightness.* "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire" (vers. 7, 8). The career of Christ on earth was one of obscurity, humiliation, and suffering, relieved now and then with outbursts of divine glory; but when He comes the second time, He will appear in all the unveiled charms of His peerless majesty, clad with heavenly splendour and brilliant as a fiery flame. The revelation of Jehovah is often referred to in the Old Testament under the emblem of fire (Exod. xiii. 21; Num. ix. 15; Deut. iv. 24; Isa. x. 16, 17, etc.). The glimpse caught by the seer of Patmos of the ineffable beauty and glory of the God-man bowed him with

astonishment and awe (Rev. i. 13-17). And who shall stand before the flashing splendours of the great and holy Judge! Heaven is too narrow for the full display of the divine majesty; it glances on every globe; it irradiates the universe.

2. *The Judge will be attended by an angelic retinue.*—"With His mighty angels" (ver. 7). The pomp and state of the earthly judge, the gaily decked chariot, the sounding trumpets, the accompanying officers of justice, are but a feeble representation of the pomp and state of the heavenly Judge, "who maketh the clouds His chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind," and whose gorgeous train is composed of hosts of mighty angels, who attend to execute His will, to punish the wicked, and to assist at the final consummation (Matt. xiii. 41, 42). These angels of might are ministers of His power, and by their agency He will make His power felt. We have an illustration of the colossal mightiness of these angelic messengers in the apparent ease with which one angel in a few hours laid thousands of the Assyrians low (2 Kings xix. 35).

II. **That the day of judgment will be a time of punishment to the disobedient.**—1. *The objects of punishment.* "Them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 8). Not that ample opportunity has not been given to all to acquire a knowledge of God. To punish for not knowing what we cannot know would be an injustice and a cruelty. God has given to all the double light of His works and word. He has also given the eyes of sense and reason, and the help of His Holy Spirit to guide all to the knowledge of Himself and of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God." It is not the involuntary ignorance of the uninstructed that is meant, but the wilful ignorance of the determined adversary, who not only rejected the gospel himself, but barbarously persecuted those who received and obeyed it. Knowledge of God is of little value if it does not lead to obedience. Confused, indistinct, inoperative knowledge is no knowledge. To know and not to obey the gospel involves a heavier condemnation.

2. *The character of the punishment.*—"Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (ver. 9). Awful words! Who can fully explain what they really involve? If destruction means annihilation, how can it be everlasting? Besides, the notion of the absolute extinction of anything God has made—the reduction to nothingness of either a reasonable soul or a material atom—has as little support from the teachings of revelation as of science. Again, it is urged that "everlasting" does not always in Scripture mean what lasts for ever, but sometimes what lasts only for a long period. But the utmost this argument could prove would be that the present possibly may be, not that it is, one of these peculiar cases. Were it the only fact in the case, there would still be the terrible uncertainty. "But then remember," says Dr. Lillie, "that if it had really been intended to teach the eternity of future punishment, no stronger words, phrases, and images could have been found for the purpose than those actually employed." Whatever the punishment may be in itself, is it not punishment enough to be for ever excluded "from the presence of the Lord," driven, a moral wreck, "from the glory of His power"? Let the words of this ninth verse be seriously weighed in private meditation, and some sense of their awful signification cannot fail to be realised.

III. **That the day of judgment will be a revelation of the glory and blessedness of the faithful.**—1. *The glory of Christ is bound up and reflected in His Church.* "When He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believe in that day" (ver. 10). The Church is the creation of Christ; for her He lived, suffered, died, and triumphed, and into her He poured the glory of His matchless character. "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them." His Church, like a mirror, shall reflect to the gaze of an admiring

universe the unutterable glory of the great Redeemer. "The beauty of the Lord our God shall be upon her, and His glory shall be seen upon her." How great a change is this from the sins, the struggles, the failures, the disappointments, and sufferings of earth!

2. *A life of faith leads to a life of glory.*—"Because our testimony among you was believed" (ver. 10). Faith rests on testimony, and is vitally affected by the character of the testimony. Saving faith relies on the infallible testimony of the word of God concerning Christ. The faith exercised in the midst of discouragements and persecution is often tenacious and vigorous. The gospel is backed by evidence sufficient to convince every sane and reasonable mind. All may believe it, who will; none will be excluded from glory but those who *will not* believe. In ancient Athens were two temples—a temple of Virtue and a temple of Honour—and none could enter the temple of Honour but by passing through the temple of Virtue. So none can enter the temple of Glory who does not first pass through the temple of Faith.

Lessons.—1. *The day of judgment, though future, is inevitable.* 2. *The proceedings of that day will be in harmony with the holiest principles of divine justice.* 3. *That day should be solemnly contemplated in its approach, in its attendant circumstances, and in its final decisions.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 7, 8. *The Divine Judge—*

I. **Has appointed a day of retribution.**

II. **Will be revealed on that day in terrible majesty.**

III. **Will take vengeance on the disobedient.**

Vers. 9, 10. *Divine Retribution—*

I. **Will be in strict harmony with the principles of universal righteousness.**

II. **Means terrible punishment to the wicked.**

III. **Will bring unspeakable felicity to the good.**

IV. **Will be recognised as faultlessly just.**

V. **Will enhance the divine glory.**

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

A Prayer for Completeness of Moral Character.

To meet Christ at His coming, and to dwell with Him in the bliss of the future, demands a moral preparedness. To promote this should be the constant, unwearied solicitude of both pastor and people. The possession of any measure of divine grace supplies the strongest motives for seeking the highest possible degree of moral excellence. In this passage observe:—

I. **That completeness of moral character is really the attainment of the divine ideal.**—"That our God would count you worthy of this calling" (ver. 11). The tyro in religion pictures to himself a more or less definite outline of what he may become and what he may do. The charm of novelty, the enthusiasm of first love, the indefiniteness of the untried and the unknown, throw a romantic glamour over the Christian career, and the mind is elated with the prospect of entering upon grand enterprises and winning signal victories. But mature thought and experience and a more familiar acquaintance with the divine mind lead us to modify many of our earlier views, and to readjust the main features of our own ideal of the Christian character, so as to be more in harmony with the divine ideal. God calls us to purity of heart and life, and makes us worthy, and gives us power to attain it. We have no worthiness in ourselves or in our works.

The fitness for heavenly glory is acquired by following out the God-given inspiration to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world."

II. **That completeness of moral character consists in the delighting in goodness.**—"And fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness" (ver. 11). Some are influenced to be good because they are afraid of the penalties attached to a life of sin. Others because of the substantial rewards and benefits found in a life of probity and uprightness. But the highest type is to love goodness for its own sake, and to delight in it as goodness; to be wholly possessed with a life-absorbing passion to find and to diffuse goodness everywhere. This approaches nearest to the divine ideal. "He hath pleasure in uprightness, and hath no pleasure in wickedness" (1 Chron. xxix. 17; Ps. v. 4). There is no pleasure like that we find in true goodness. Severus, emperor of Rome, confessed on his deathbed, "I have been everything, and now find that everything is nothing." Then, directing that the urn should be brought to him, he said, "Little urn, thou shalt contain one for whom the world was too little."

III. **That completeness of moral character is attained by the exercise of a divinely inspired faith.**—"And the work of faith with power" (ver. 11). We have no innate righteousness. It is God-given. It is received, maintained, and extended in the soul by faith in the merits of the all-righteous Saviour. "While faith itself is the gift of God, it is no less an exercise of the mind and heart of man. And because, like everything else about man, it partakes of his great weakness, it needs ever, as it walks in the light of the divine word, to stay itself on the divine hand." Faith is the mighty instrument by which the divine life is propagated in the soul, and by which its loftiest blessings are secured.

IV. **That completeness of moral character promotes the divine glory.**—"That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in Him" (ver. 12). It will be seen at the last that Christ has been more abundantly glorified by a humble, holy life than by wealthy benefactions or by gigantic enterprises. The name now so much despised, and for which those who now bear it suffer so much, shall be magnified and exalted "above every name." The followers of Christ shall share in the glory of their Lord. Their excellencies redound to His glory; and His glory is reflected on them in such a way that there is a mutual glorification. "What a glory it will be to them before all creatures that He who sits upon the throne once shared their sorrows and died for them! What a glory that He still wears their nature, and is not ashamed to call them brethren! What a glory to be for ever clothed with His righteousness! What a glory to reign with Him and be glorified together!" (*Lillie*).

V. **That completeness of moral character is rendered possible by the provisions of divine grace.**—"According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 12). The source of all human goodness, in all its varying degrees, is in the divine favour. It is worthy of note that Christ is here recognised as on an equality with the Father, and as being with Him the fontal source of grace. The glory which it is possible for sanctified humanity to reach is "according to grace." The grace is "exceeding abundant"; so is the glory. There is a fathomless mine of moral wealth provided for every earnest seeker after God.

VI **That completeness of moral character should be the subject of constant prayer.**—"Wherefore also we pray always for you" (ver. 11). The Thessalonians were favoured in having the prayers of the apostles. It is a beautiful example of the unselfishness of the Christian spirit when we are so concerned for others as to pray for them. We value that about which we pray the most. We have need of prayer to help us to attend faithfully to the little things which make up the daily duties of the Christian life. Attention to trifles is the way to completeness of moral character. The great Italian sculptor, Michael Angelo, was once visited by an acquaintance, who remarked, on entering his studio, "Why, you

have done nothing to that figure since I was here last?" "Yes," was the reply, "I have softened this expression, touched off that projection, and made other improvements." "Oh!" said the visitor, "these are mere trifles." "True," answered the sculptor; "but remember that trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle."

Lessons.—1. *It is important to have a lofty ideal of Christian perfection constantly in view.* 2. *While humbled by failures we are not to be disheartened.* 3. *Earnest, persevering prayer wins great moral victories.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 11, 12. *Genuine Religion illustrated.*

I. **Religion in its nature.**—It is a worthiness into which we are called and with which we are invested.

II. **Religion in its source.**—The goodness of God. 1. *All present religious views and feelings are the effect of divine grace.* 2. *Man has no rightful claim to divine grace.* 3. *Religion has its true source in the good pleasure of God.*

III. **Religion in its principle.**—Faith. "The work of faith with power." The producing and sustaining principle of religion.

IV. **Religion in its end.**—1. *The glory of the Redeemer.* "That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you." 2. *The glory of the redeemed.* "And ye in Him."

V. **Religion in its measure or rule of dispensation.**—"According to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."—*Zeta.*

Ver. 12. *Christ glorified in His People.*—The bust of Luther was shut out from the Walhalla, or German Westminster Abbey. The people were indignant, but said, "Why need we a bust when he lives in our hearts?" And thus the Christian ever feels when he beholds many around him multiplying pictures and statues of Christ, and he can say, "I need them not, for He is ever with me; he lives perpetually in my heart."

CHAPTER II.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Beseech . . . by the coming of our Lord.**—The English reader who consults the similar phrase "to beseech by" in Rom. xii. 1 will be wholly astray. St Paul begs his readers not to be thrown into consternation or kept in a flutter of excitement over that matter of the Parousia, or "coming."

Ver. 2. **Not soon shaken.**—Like a house built on sand when the storm breaks in fury, or like the *mobile vulgus* in Thessalonica who were only too willing to follow the lead of Jewish agitators (Acts xvii. 13). **In mind.**—R.V. "from your mind." "Out of your wits" expresses the apostle's meaning exactly. They are to behave like men in whom reason is supreme—not like men in a panic. **Or be troubled.**—The same word was used in reporting our Lord's counsels on the same subject. "Be not troubled: . . . the end is not yet" (Matt. xxiv. 6). **By epistle as from us.**—Either by misinterpretation of something St. Paul had written, or by a forged letter purporting to have come from him.

Ver. 3. **Let no man deceive.**—R.V. "beguile or cheat you." **A falling away.**—Lit. "*the* apostasy," a desertion from the army of God; a recantation of faith in Christ. Our Master foretold that when "iniquity shall abound the love of the many shall be blown cool" (Matt. xxiv. 12). **That man of sin.**—Another reading is "lawlessness." The man in whom sin gathers itself up into a head—the last product of sin. **The son of perdition**—*par*

xcellence, sharing the title with him whom Christ so named (John xvii. 12). Abaddon (Rev. ix. 11) may claim him as his own ultimately.

Ver. 4. **Who opposeth and exalteth himself.**—The participle rendered "who opposeth" is used twice by St. Luke in the plural as "adversaries." So in the singular (1 Tim. v. 14). The compound word for "exalteth himself" occurs (2 Cor. xii. 7), and is given as "exalted-above-measure." **Above all that is called God.**—The shudder of horror in these words reminds us how a monotheistic Jew must regard the impious act. We can understand that a Roman emperor would regard the God of Jew or Christian as a tutelary deity; but the acme of profanity is reached in this act of Antichrist. **Or that is worshipped.**—R.V. margin, "Gr. an object of worship." "The very name *Sebastos*, the Greek rendering of the imperial title *Augustus*, to which *Divus* was added at death (signifying 'the one to be worshipped'), was an offence to the religious mind. . . . Later, Cæsar or Christ was the martyr's alternative" (*Findlay*). **Showing Himself that He is God.**—Or, as we should say, "representing Himself to be God." Compare Herod's acceptance of the worship (Acts xii. 22).

Ver. 6. **What withholdeth.**—R.V. "that which restraineth." "A hint was sufficient, *verbum sapientibus*: more than a hint would have been dangerous" (*Ibid.*).

Ver. 7. **He who now letteth.**—R.V. "there is one that restraineth." This old word for "obstruct" is found in Isa. xliii. 13: "I will work, and who shall let (*i.e.* hinder) it?" "Where then are we to look . . . for the check and bridle of lawlessness? Where but to law itself? The fabric of civil law and the authority of the magistrate formed a bulwark and break-water against the excesses both of autocratic tyranny and of popular violence" (*Ibid.*).

Ver. 8. **And then shall that Wicked be revealed.**—R.V. "and then shall be revealed the lawless one." Outward restraint being withdrawn, there is no inward principle to keep him back: he is "lawless." **And shall destroy.**—R.V. "bring to nought." It is the same word as that which describes the effect of the revelation of the gospel on "death" in 2 Tim. i. 10—to render absolutely powerless. **With the brightness of His coming.**—R.V. "by the manifestation of His coming." Lit. "by the epiphany of His presence."

Ver. 9. **Even Him, whose coming, etc.**—These words look back to the beginning of ver. 8. "The two comings—the *parousia* of the Lord Jesus and that of the Man of Lawlessness—are set in contrast. The second forms the dark background to the glory of the first" (*Ibid.*). **Power and signs and lying wonders.**—Simulating the supernatural evidences of the gospel as the magicians of Egypt those of Moses.

Ver. 10. **Deceivableness of unrighteousness.**—R.V. "deceit." The deceit which is characteristic of unrighteousness, or marks its methods. **They received not the love of the truth.** The *sine qua non* for an answer to Pilate's question is this love of the truth.

Ver. 11. **God shall send them strong delusion.**—R.V. "God sendeth them a working of error." "It is a just, but mournful result, that rejecters of Christ's miracles become believers in Satan's, and that atheism should be avenged by superstition. So it has been and will be" (*Ibid.*). One is reminded of the old saying that "the gods first drive mad those whom they mean to destroy."

Ver. 12. **Believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**—Here again we have the mental rejection of truth consequent on a liking for that which truth condemns. If "the heart makes the theologian," the want of it makes the infidel.

Ver. 13. **We are bound to give thanks.**—The same form of expression as in i. 3, save that here "we" is expressed separately and emphatically.

Ver. 15. **Stand fast.**—Ready for any shock which may come unexpectedly through the insidious methods of Antichrist. **Hold the traditions.**—As if the apostle said, keep a *strong* hand on them. Tradition is that which is handed over from one to another. Compare 1 Cor. xi. 23. "I received of the Lord. . . I delivered unto you. . . . He was betrayed." Here the words "delivered" and "betrayed" represent a doing, of which the word for "tradition" is the act completed. Paul handed over that which his Lord charged him to transmit; Judas handed over Christ to the Jews.

Ver. 16. **Everlasting consolation and good hope.**—Consolation, or comfort, is ministered by the Paraclete (John xiv. 16; Acts ix. 31), who abides for ever with those who are Christ's.

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 1—12.

Antichrist Portrayed.

Various interpretations of this remarkable paragraph have been attempted. Some modern German critics would divest it of any prophetic significance, and treat it as a representation of the writer's own personal feelings and forebodings. Others would restrict its application to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and to persons, principles, and events that preceded that catastrophe.

The commonly received Protestant interpretation is to identify the Man of Sin and his doings with the Papacy; and there are certainly many points of that interpretation that accord very remarkably with the prophecy. But there are serious objections to all these views. We believe the revelation of the Antichrist here depicted is yet future, though the elements of his power are now in preparation. From the whole passage we gather the following suggestions:—

I. **That Antichrist will be embodied in some living personality.**—He is called "that man of sin, the son of perdition": "that Wicked"—*the lawless one* (vers. 3-8). The fathers of the early Church, for at least three centuries after the apostolic age, while differing on some minor details, seemed unanimous in understanding by the Man of Sin, not a system of deceit and wickedness, or a succession of individuals at the head of such a system, but some one man, the living personal Antichrist, the incarnation of Satanic craft and energy, who should put forth his power to weaken and destroy the Church.

1. *He will arrogantly assume divine prerogatives.*—"Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (ver. 4). In these words we note Antichrist's intrusion into the special dwelling-place of God, his usurping session there, and his blasphemous and ostentatious assumption of divinity. The wildest excesses of pride and audacity cannot exceed this.

2. *His advent will be accompanied with remarkable displays of Satanic power.*—"Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (ver. 9). Antichrist as the masterpiece of Satan will be endowed with extraordinary qualities. The devil will tax his prodigious abilities to the utmost in making this great adversary of the Church as potent for mischief as possible. We know how readily the man of science can impose upon the ignorant with his experiments. And how easy it is for Satan, with his vast knowledge and resources, to delude thousands with his simulations of the miraculous! The advent of Antichrist is to be a fiendish caricature and audacious mockery of the glorious coming of the Son of God!

II. **That Antichrist will work deplorable mischief in human souls.**—1. *He seeks by secret methods to promote apostasy from the Church of God.*" "A falling away first" (ver. 3). "The mystery of iniquity doth already work" (ver. 7). Here we detect the germs and preparation of the antichristian curse that is to work such havoc. The primitive Church of apostolic times was not such a model of perfection as we sometimes imagine. The leaven of iniquity, of *lawlessness*, the essence of all sin, was already working. Observe the sorrowing references of the apostle to the many evils of the different Churches. Tit. i. 11; 1 Tim. vi. 5; 2 Cor. xi. 26; Philem. 9; 2 Tim. i. 15; 1 John ii. 18-20; 2 John 7; 3 John, 9. *Passim.* The most disastrous apostasies have been the result of long, secret endeavours.

2. *He begets a dislike to saving truth.*—"With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved" (ver. 10). The truth was revealed, its saving benefits were offered; they had but to accept the truth and they were safe. But they rejected the truth; they loved it not. Their treatment of the gospel rendered them more easy victims to the deceptions of Antichrist; fascinated by his unrighteous glamour, they recede from the truth and cherish a bitter hostility towards it.

3. *His victims are abandoned to self-delusion and condemnation.*—"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned"—might be *judged* according to their individual character and works—"who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (vers. 11, 12). See here the fearful consequences of a hatred to and rejection of the truth! The soul takes delight in sinning—has "pleasure in

unrighteousness." It is, then, not only abandoned to its iniquity, but its delusions are intensified so as to embrace the most palpable falsehoods as truth. It shall then be judged on its own merits, so that God shall be justified in His speaking and clear in His judging. Terrible indeed is the fate of the victims who fall under the spell of Antichrist.

III. **That the coming of Antichrist is for a time restrained.**—"And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. . . . Only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way" (vers. 6, 7). There is an external power with an individual at its head which holds back the power of Antichrist until the proper season comes. What that power is is not revealed; but God can use any power for this purpose, until the divinely appointed time shall come for the revelation and overthrow of Antichrist.

IV. **That Antichrist shall be summarily destroyed.**—"Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth"—as insects wither on the mere approach of fire—"and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming" (ver. 8)—with the *appearing* of His coming, as it were the first gleaming dawn of His advent. For a time Antichrist shall reign in pomp and splendour and delude many to their ruin; but at the coming of the true Lord of the Church the great impostor shall be dethroned and utterly abolished. "It is enough," says Chrysostom, "that He be present, and all these things perish. He will stay the deception simply by appearing."

V. **That the followers of Christ need not be afraid of losing any benefits to be conferred by His second coming.**—"Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand" (vers. 1, 2)—*on hand, has already come.* When Paul wrote the first epistle, the Thessalonians "were sorrowing by the graves of their departed friends, and the grief of nature was enhanced by the apprehension that their beloved ones might suffer loss at the coming of the Lord. But now, should they hear that He had come and had not called for them, a yet deeper, more agitating motion must seize them, lest they themselves had forfeited their share in the glory of the kingdom." These words would allay their fears. Christ has yet to come, and before that coming Antichrist is to arise and reign. Wait patiently, labour diligently, and be not harassed with too great an eagerness to know future events. All the blessings of Christ's second coming shall be shared by you and by all who are to be gathered together unto Him.

Lessons.—1. *There are trying times ahead.* 2. *The only safety for the soul is to hold fast the truth.* 3. *At the darkest moment of the Church's trial the glory of God will appear.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 1-6. *A Warning against Imposition.*

I. **The danger.**—1. *Their faith was imperilled.* 2. *Daily duties were interfered with.*

II. **Signs of the coming end.**—1. *By a great apostasy.* 2. *The appearance of Antichrist as the man of sin and son of perdition.* 3. *The proud pretensions of Antichrist.* (1) Opposing Christ, (2) Substituting error for truth. (3) Overweening self-exaltation.

III. **Hindrances to the spread of truth** (ver. 6).—1. *The civil powers of that day.* 2. *The machinations of Satan at all times.* 3. *The unfaithfulness of God's people.*

Vers. 1-3. *A False Alarm—*

I. **May arise from a misconception**

of an important truth.—"Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him" (ver. 1).

II. **Is aggravated by unwarrantable deceptions.**—"Let no man deceive you by any means" (ver. 3). "Neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is come" (ver. 2).

III. **Is the cause of much real suffering.**—"Shaken in mind—troubled" (ver. 2)—like a ship escaped from its moorings, tossed in a rolling sea.

IV. **Is allayed by the affectionate entreaty of competent teachers.**—"We beseech you, brethren" (ver. 1).

Ver. 5. *Memory*—

I. **Is freighted with treasures of precious truth.**—"I told you these things."

II. **Associates the presence and character of the teacher with the truth taught.**—"When I was yet with you."

III. **Is often vividly reminded of the value of its possession.**—"Remember ye not."

Vers. 7-10. *The Mystery of Iniquity*—

I. **Is the deepest and most subtle form of error.**

II. **Is propagated with great cunning and persistency.**

III. **Is embodied in a powerful and wicked personality** (vers. 7, 8).

IV. **Is Satanic in its origin and manifestation** (vers. 9, 10).

Vers. 10-12. *The Destructive Subtlety of Sin.*

I. **It has manifold methods of deception.**—"With all deceivableness of unrighteousness" (ver. 10).

II. **It incites the soul to a hatred of saving truth.**—"That received not the love of the truth that they might be saved" (ver. 10).

III. **It abandons its victims to judicial self-deception.**—"God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie" (ver. 11).

IV. **It leads to inevitable condemnation.**—"That they all might be damned" (ver. 12).

V. **It encourages sin for the love of sin.**—"Who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (ver. 12).

Vers. 11, 12. *Strong Delusions.*

I. **Believing a lie as truth.**

II. **Sent as a judgment for not believing the truth.**

III. **Are brought on by those who have pleasure in sin.**

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

Salvation a Divine Act.

When the air is thick with antichristian theories, sincere inquirers after truth are perplexed, the grasp of the hesitating is loosened, and the fidelity of the strongest severely tested. Only those who fully yield themselves up to the teaching and guidance of the divine Spirit are safe. A clever inventor has recently constructed a fireproof dress, which enables him to walk about unharmed in the midst of the fiercest fire. Experimental godliness is a fireproof dress, and the soul clothed with this is safely guarded from the fiery darts of the wicked, and will pass unscathed through the fiercest fires of temptation. We never know what it is to be really saved till we personally experience the sanctifying power of the truth. These verses teach that salvation is a divine act.

I. **Salvation is an act of the divine will.**—1. *The divine will is actuated by divine love.* "Brethren *beloved* of the Lord, God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation" (ver. 13). When we examine the sources of salvation, we find them not in ourselves, but in some power outside of ourselves. We are saved, not because we are good, or better than others, or more favourably circumstanced, but because God has chosen us. And if we ask still further how

it is that God should lavish the grace of His salvation on sinful man, we are reduced, in the final analysis, to this answer: Such is the divine will—a will swayed in all its mighty potentialities by infinite love.

"Love, strong as death; nay, stronger—
Love mightier than the grave;
Broad as the earth, and longer
Than ocean's widest wave.
This is the love that sought us,
This is the love that bought us,
This is the love that brought us,
To gladdest day from saddest night,
From deepest shame to glory bright,
From depths of death to life's fair height,
From darkness to the joy of light."

Bonar.

2. *The divine will provides the means of salvation.*—"Whereunto He called you by our gospel" (ver. 14). The gospel is God's method of salvation, and it is through this gospel He "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 4). If the gospel were but a human expedient, it would fail; but, as it was originated and devised in the divine mind, so it is backed and made forceful by the operation of the divine will.

II. **Salvation as a divine act is in harmony with individual freedom.**—1. *Salvation implies personal holiness.* "Through sanctification of the Spirit" (ver. 13). The Spirit sanctifies the individual soul, and the soul, in the exercise of its voluntary power, co-operates with the Spirit. The soul feels the need of being sanctified, is willing to be sanctified, earnestly desires to be sanctified, and gives free, unrestricted scope to the Spirit in His sanctifying work.

2. *Salvation implies personal faith.*—"And belief of the truth" (ver. 13). This clause brings out distinctly that the sanctification of the Spirit is not wrought on a passive and unresponsive agent. Faith is the gift of God, but it is the act of man. It is a self-giving; the surrender of his own freedom to secure the larger freedom that salvation confers on the soul that trusts. Without God's gift there would be no faith, and without man's exercise of that gift there is no salvation. It is not faith that saves, but the Christ received by faith. Erskine puts it thus: "As it is not the laying on the plaster that heals the sore, but the plaster itself that is laid on, so it is not the faith, or receiving of Christ, but Christ received by faith that saves us. It is not our looking to the brazen serpent mystical, but the mystical brazen serpent looked unto by faith—Christ received by faith—that saves us."

III. **Salvation as a divine act aims at securing for the soul the highest blessedness.**—"To the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ver. 14). The saved soul aspires after glory, but it is glory of the loftiest type. It is not the changeful glory of worldly magnificence. It is not the glory of Paul, or of the greatest human genius. It is "the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." When the soul catches a glimpse of the splendour of this divine blessedness, it can be satisfied with no lower aims. "Paint and canvas," said Guthrie, "cannot give the hues of a rainbow or of the beams of the sun. No more can words describe the Saviour's glory. Nay, what is the most glowing and ecstatic view that the highest faith of a soul, hovering on the borders of another world, ever obtained of Christ, compared with the reality? It is like the sun changed by a frosty fog-bank into a dull, red copper ball—shorn of the splendour that no mortal eyes can look upon." As it is Christ's glory that we seek, so it is Christ's glory we shall share.

IV. **Salvation as a divine act affords matter for unceasing gratitude.**—"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you" (ver. 13). The mercy of

God in our salvation is ever providing fruitful themes for gratitude on earth: the glory of Christ as revealed in heaven will be the song of everlasting thankfulness and praise. Every added trophy of saving power augments the gratitude and joy of the faithful.

Lessons.—1. *The rejection of the truth is the rejection of salvation.* 2. *Salvation brings the highest good to man and the greatest glory to God.* 3. *Salvation will be the exhaustless theme of the heavenly song.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 13. *The Holy Ghost the Sanctifier.*

I. **Connect the divine purpose and agency, that the nature and effect of the latter may be more apparent.**—To collect a people out of the wreck of human life has been God's purpose from the first. To sanctify them is to separate them to God in fact and in effect. The Holy Ghost is given by Christ to sever the once dead in sins from the dead around them.

II. **The scope of this agency.**—God's work is perfect. It has its stages; but the Holy Ghost conducts it from first to last. Sanctification is progressive. The end of sanctification is salvation.

III. **The ordinary means through which the Holy Ghost operates.**—Through belief of the truth, the gospel. The Spirit sanctifies through the truth. —*H. T. Lumsden.*

Ver 14. *The Glory of Sainthood*—

I. **Is the object of the gospel to promote.**—"Whereunto He hath called you by our gospel."

II. **Is a conscious personal possession.**—"To the obtaining of the glory."

III. **Is a sharing of the glory of Christ.**—"Of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What Saints should be.—In the cathedral of St. Mark, Venice, a marvellous building lustrous with an Oriental splendour beyond description, there are pillars said to have been brought from Solomon's temple; these are of alabaster, a substance firm and endurable as granite, and yet transparent, so that the light glows through them. Behold an emblem of what all true pillars of the Church should be—firm in their faith and transparent in their character; men of simple mould, ignorant of tortuous and deceptive ways, and yet men of strong will, not readily to be led aside or bent from their uprightness.—*Spurgeon.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 15.

Christian Steadfastness.

In all ages the people of God have been assailed with the weapons of a subtle and plausible philosophy which has sought to supplant the simple truth of the gospel with human opinions. The evil heart of man chafes under the righteous restrictions of the truth, and in its angry and delirious opposition has sought to rid itself of God and of all the laws that bind it to a life of obedience and holiness. And when it fancies it has succeeded in demolishing the truths it hated and against which it rebelled, it is aghast at the desolation it has wrought and recoils in alarm from the dark, horrible gulf to the brink of which it had forced itself. Stricken with bewilderment and despair, man strives to construct a religion for himself, and he seeks to substitute his own wild ravings for the truths of divine revelation. It is the attempt of a bold, impious infidelity to put error in the place of truth, philosophy in the place of religion, human opinion in the place of God. The exhortation of this verse is always timely.

I. **Christian steadfastness is an important and ever-present duty.**—1. *It is*

necessary to growth and maturity in personal piety. Trees must grow or die. So it is with piety: it must grow or perish. No plant or tree can thrive that is being perpetually plucked up and transplanted; nor can the soul prosper unless it is steadfastly rooted in the soil of truth. Darwin describes a marine plant—the *Macrocystis pyrifera*—that rises two hundred feet from the depths of the Western Ocean and floats for many fathoms on the surface, uninjured among the waves and breakers, which no masses of rock, however hard, can long withstand. It maintains its strength by clinging tenaciously to the rocks far down below the surface of the sea. So personal piety grows and flourishes by maintaining a firm hold of the Rock of Ages.

2. *It is necessary in bearing witness for Christ.*—The value of a lighthouse or a landmark to the mariner is, that he can rely on always finding it in the same place. And the value of Christian testimony is that it is not erratic and changeful, but stable and reliable: it hesitates not to witness for Christ in any place. Fifty years ago at a dinner-party in the west end of London, the conversation was dishonouring to Christ. One guest was silent, and presently asked that the bell might be rung. On the appearance of the servant he ordered his carriage, and with polished courtesy apologised to his host for his enforced departure, saying, *for I am still a Christian.* This gentleman was the late Sir Robert Peel.

3. *It is a stimulating example to the weak and faltering.*—There are timid, feeble followers of Christ who, until they become well grounded, lean on others; and if their exemplars vacillate and change, so do they. Few have the courage to break away from a pernicious example. When travelling on the Continent, Dr. Duff made the acquaintance of Cardinal Wiseman, and for some time travelled with him; but when at Antwerp he saw the cardinal prostrate himself before the Virgin, he courteously but firmly bade him "good-bye."

II. **Christian steadfastness is shown in an unflinching maintenance of apostolic doctrine.**—"Hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle." These traditions were the doctrines preached by the apostles. For some years after the ascension of Christ, there was no written gospel or epistle. The truth was taught orally by those who were living witnesses of the facts on which the doctrines—or traditions—were based.

1. *Apostolic doctrine must be clearly apprehended.*—It must therefore be diligently studied, and the truth sifted from the mass of errors with which false teachers surround it. What is not intelligently comprehended cannot be firmly held.

2. *Apostolic doctrine must be earnestly embraced.*—Not simply discussed, not simply admired and praised, but prayerfully and cordially accepted—taken in as spiritual food, and systematically fed upon to give strength and stamina to the soul.

3. *Apostolic doctrine must be firmly held and stoutly defended against all errors.*—"Hold the traditions." Believe them when tempted to disbelieve; defend them when assailed by the enemy. A brave Athenian, who wrought deeds of valour in the battle of Marathon, seized with his right hand a stranded galley filled with Persians. When his right hand was cut off, he seized the boat with his left, and when that was smitten, he held on with his teeth till he died. The grasp of truth by a Christian believer should not be less tenacious than the dogged heroism of a heathen warrior.

III. **Christian steadfastness is emphatically enforced.**—"Therefore, brethren, stand fast." Though misunderstood and misrepresented, though savagely opposed by the enemies of the truth, stand fast. As the wings of the bird are strengthened by the resistance of the atmosphere in which it floats, so your graces will be strengthened by the opposition with which you resolutely contend.

In order that your own personal piety may be matured, that your witnessing for Christ may be unmistakable, and that your example may be a stimulating encouragement to others, "stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught."

Lessons.—1. *The unstable are the prey of every passing temptation.* 2. *The word of God is the unfailing source of moral strength.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 16, 17.

Prayer an Expression of Ministerial Anxiety.

The apostle had warned the Thessalonians of the errors that were becoming rife among them. Indeed, the existence of these errors, and the grave injury they threatened to the faith of the new converts, prompted him to write these epistles—the first in a series of magnificent apostolic polemics. The apostle knew that if the simplicity of the gospel was vitiated at the beginning of its world-wide mission, unspeakable disaster would ensue, as the checkered history of the Church in the early centuries unhappily proved. Hence his anxiety, not only to clearly state, but with all his resources of logic and persuasion, resolutely to defend the cardinal principles of the gospel. He not only argues, but prays. These verses teach that *prayer is the expression of ministerial anxiety.*

I. **It recognises the need of spiritual consolation.**—"Now our Lord . . . comfort your hearts" (vers. 16, 17). You have sorrowed over the loss of friends, and harassed yourselves as to their condition in another world. I have pointed out to you that your fears were groundless (1 Thess. iv. 13-18). Now, I commend you God as the Source and Giver of all consolation, and pray that He may specially comfort you. "It is God's presence," says Burroughs, "that constitutes the saint's morning. As the stars may impart some light, and yet the brightness of all combined cannot form the light of day, but when the sun appears there is day forthwith, so God may make some comfort arise to a soul from secondary and inferior means; but it is He Himself alone who, by the shining of His face and the smiles of His countenance, causes morning." A comfort that is made up of our fancies is like a spider's web that is weaved out of its bowels, and is gone and swept away with the turn of a besom.

II. **It recognises the perils that beset the path of obedience.**—"And establish you in every good word and work" (ver. 17)—or, according to the Revised Version, "every good *work and word.*" Work is better than speech, deeds more eloquent than words, though both are necessary. The best safeguard against temptation is to be employed. "The busy man is tempted by one devil, the idle man by a thousand." The force of gunpowder is not known till some spark falls on it; so the most placid natures do not reveal the evil that is in them till they are assailed by some fierce and sudden temptation. Excellence in anything can only be reached by hard work; so stability in grace is attained only by being diligently engaged in God's service. Steadfastness is not dull quiescence: it is self-absorbing activity. If you would be strong, you must work.

III. **It recognises the divine source of all spiritual help.**—1. *That this help is the outcome of divine love.* "Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God even our Father, which hath loved us" (ver. 16). God helps because He loves. His love evokes the best and noblest in us, as the master-musician brings out melodies from an instrument that inferior players have failed to produce.

"Love is a passion
Which kindles honour into noblest acts."

"O let Thy love constrain us
To give our hearts to Thee;
Let nothing henceforth pain us
But that which paineth Thee.

"Our joy, our one endeavour,
Through suffering, conflict, shame,
To serve Thee, gracious Saviour,
And magnify Thy name."

2. *That this help meets every possible exigency of the Christian life.*—"And hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace" (ver. 16). The consolation refers to everything in the present, the good hope to everything in the future. The consolation is constant, *everlasting*, as flowing from inexhaustible sources, and is ever available in all the changes and needs of life; and the hope turns our fears into confidence and our sorrows into joy. When the frail barques of the Portuguese went sailing south, they found the sea so stormy at the southern point of Africa that they named it the Cape of Storms; but after it had been well rounded by bolder navigators, they named it the Cape of Good Hope. So, by the divine help afforded us, many a rough cape of storms has been transformed into a cape of good hope. All spiritual help is given "through grace"—the free, unmerited favour of God—and is therefore a fitting subject of prayer.

Lessons.—1. *Every minister should be emphatically a man of prayer.* 2. *Prayer for others has a reflex benefit on the suppliant.* 3. *An anxious spirit finds relief and comfort in prayer.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 16, 17. *St. Paul's Prayer for the Thessalonians.*

I. **The objects the apostle addressed.**—1. *God, even our Father.* 2. *Our Lord Jesus Christ.*

II. **The gifts the apostle acknowledged.**—1. *The manifestation of divine love.* 2. *The communication of saving grace.* 3. *The bestowment of Christian hope.*

III. **The blessings the apostle requested.**—1. *Increasing felicity in the Lord.* 2. *Persevering stability in the truth.*—*Eta.*

Ver. 16. *A Good Hope through Grace.*

I. **The grace of hope.**—1. *Refers to the resurrection of the body.* 2. *To eternal life to be enjoyed by both soul and body.* 3. *Pre-requisites of this hope.*—Conviction of sin. An experimental acquaintance with the gospel.

II. **The excellency of this hope.**—"A good hope." 1. *In opposition to the hopes of worldly men.* 2. *It is a lively hope.* 3. *The object of it is an infinite and eternal good.* 4. *It has a good foundation.* 5. *It produces good effects.*

III. **The source of this hope.**—"Through grace." 1. *Man is the subject of infinite demerit.* 2. *Christ alone possesses infinite merit.* 3. *The Scripture warns against all self dependence.*—*Helps for the Pulpit.*

CHAPTER III.

CRITICAL AND EXPLANATORY NOTES.

Ver. 1. **Have free course and be glorified.**—Probably St. Paul took this image from the Old Testament. In Ps. cxlvii. 15 the word of the Lord is said to "run very swiftly."

Ver. 2. **Unreasonable and wicked men.**—The word for "unreasonable" only occurs twice beside in the New Testament: once, the malefactor on the cross says, "This man has done nothing amiss," or out of place; and again the barbarians "beheld nothing amiss" come to Paul when the viper had fastened on his hand. The thief is a good commentator here. Men who by their vagaries hold even their friends in painful suspense, and especially such as are indifferent to morality, seem to be meant.

Ver. 3. **And keep you from evil.**—"Keep" here is a military word reminding of the psalmist's name for his God—"Shield." The Revisers add "one" after "evil," as in the Lord's Prayer.

Ver. 5. **Direct your hearts.**—The same word for "direct" again occurs only in 1 Thess. iii. 11 and Luke i. 79. A similar phrase in the LXX. of 1 Chron. xxix. 18 (R.V. "prepare"). **Into the patient waiting for Christ.**—A.V. margin and R.V. text, "into the patience of Christ." "The Thessalonians were eagerly awaiting His return: let them wait for it in His patient spirit" (*Findlay*).

Ver. 6. **Walketh disorderly.**—Falling out of the ranks and desertion of the post of duty are grave faults, which if the *esprit de corps* do not prevent it must be punished by treating the defaulter as one who has discredited his comrades in arms.

Ver. 7. **We behaved not ourselves disorderly among you.**—"We never lived an undisciplined life among you." Men will bear the sharp rebukes of a martinet, even when they observe that he is as much under discipline as he would have the youngest recruit, as the lives of men like Havelock and Gordon testify.

Ver. 10. **If any would not work, neither should he eat.**—"A stern, but necessary and merciful rule, the neglect of which makes charity demoralising" (*Ibid.*). It is parasitism which is condemned.

Ver. 11. **Working not at all, but are busybodies.**—"Not working, but working round people," as we might represent St. Paul's play on the words. "Their only business is to be busybodies."

Ver. 13. **Be not weary in well-doing.**—Such bad behaviour under cover of the Christian name is abhorrent to St. Paul. "The loveliness of perfect deeds" must be worthily sustained. Well-doing here points to that which is admirable in conduct rather than that which is beneficent.

Ver. 14. **Have no company with him.**—The difference between this treatment of a delinquent and excommunication may be more in idea than fact. He would feel himself tabooed in either case. But this agrees better with the notion of Christians as being separated. "*Come out from among them.*" Cf. Tit. ii. 10. **That he may be ashamed.**—Not, of course, that he may become a laughing-stock, but that, feeling abashed, he may quickly put himself right with the community.

Ver. 15. **Yet count him not as an enemy.**—When Christ says the impenitent brother is to be regarded as a Gentile, He gives no sanction to the way in which the Jew too often regarded the Gentile. **Admonish him as a brother.**—Who, though in error, has not sacrificed his claim to gentle treatment and consideration.

Ver. 16. **Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always.**—The Church at Thessalonica had been passing through stormy waters. The apostle prays that God may give them to

> "Feel His halcyon rest within
> Calming the storms of dread and sin."

Ver. 17. **The salutation . . . the token.**—As though he said, "This that I am about to write is my sign-manual."

Ver. 18. **The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.**—Whatever St. Paul's handwriting may have been, it could not well be more characteristic than this word "grace," as certainly he could not have chosen a more beautiful word to engrave on his seal.

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

Prayer for Ministers.

Prayer should not be all on one side. It is a mutual obligation and privilege. The Thessalonians are reminded how often they were the subject of anxious prayer, and they are now asked to remember their own ministers at the throne of grace. Mutual prayer intensifies mutual sympathy and affection, and deepens the interest of both parties in promoting the success of the gospel. Note :—

I. **That prayer for ministers is apostolically enjoined.**—"Brethren, pray for us" (ver. 1). True prayer is spontaneous. It does not wait to be formally authorised. A loving heart loves to pray. Nevertheless, there are laggards in this duty, and they may be prompted to the exercise by employing all the weight of apostolic authority and example. If apostles felt the need of prayer, how much more should we! Ministers are but men; but by the use of the word "brethren" the writer indicates that ministers and people have common privileges, common wants, and common dangers. The ministerial office has also its special responsibilities and perils, and nothing helps more vitally the efficient discharge of its duties than the constant prayers of an appreciative and devoted people.

II. **That prayer for ministers should have special reference to the success of the gospel.**—1. *The gospel is divine.* "The word of the Lord" (ver. 1). The gospel is a message to man, but it is more than a human message. It is the voice of God speaking to man through man. If it had been simply of human origin, it would have been forgotten and superseded by the changing theories ever teeming from the fertile brain of man. Every human institution is liable to be supplanted by another. There is nothing permanent in philosophy, government, or morals that is not based on eternal truth. The gospel is abiding, because it rests on unchanging truth. It is the "word of the Lord."

2. *The spread of the gospel is beset with difficulties.*—"That the word of the Lord may have free course" (ver. 1). The pioneers of the gospel in Thessalonica had to contend with the malignant hatred of the unbelieving Jews, with the seductive theories of the Grecian philosophy, and with the jealous opposition of the Roman power. All hindrances to the gospel have a common root in the depravity of the human heart—hence the difficulties occasioned by the inconsistencies of half-hearted professors, the paralysing influence of scepticism, and the violence of external persecution. The chief difficulty is spiritual, and the weapon to contend against it must be spiritual—the weapon of *all-prayer.* Savonarola once said, "If there be no enemy, no fight; if no fight, no victory; if no victory, no crown." We are to pray that the gospel "may have free course"—may run, not simply creep, or loiter haltingly on the way, but speed along as a swift-footed messenger. "Take courage from thy cause: thou fightest for thy God, and against His enemy. Is thy enemy too potent? fear not. Art thou besieged? faint not. Art thou routed? fly not. Call aid, and thou shalt be strengthened; petition, and thou shalt be relieved; pray, and thou shalt be recruited."

3. *The glory of the gospel is to change men's hearts and ennoble men's lives.*—"And be glorified, even as it is with you" (ver. 1). You Thessalonians, notwithstanding your imperfect views and defective conduct, are samples of what the gospel can do in changing the heart and giving a lofty purpose to the life. Pray that its triumph may be more complete in you, and that its uplifting influence may be realised by others. "That which Plato was unable to effect," says Pascal, "even in the case of a few select and learned persons, a secret power, by the help only of a few words, is now wrought upon thousands of uneducated men."

III. **That prayer for ministers should be offered that their lives may be preserved from the violence of cruel and unbelieving enemies.**—"And that ye may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith"

(ver. 2). *Not all have faith*, even among those who profess to have it, and it is certainly true of all those who scout and reject the gospel. The unbelieving are perverse and wicked, and it is from this class that the minister is met by the most unreasonable and malicious opposition. Perhaps the most dangerous foes with which a minister has to contend are those who make some profession of religion, but in heart and practice deny it. "Men will write for religion, fight for it, die for it—anything but live for it." The minister, girdled with the prayers of his people, is screened from the plots and attacks of the wicked.

Lessons.—1. *The success of the gospel is a signal demonstration of its divine authorship.* 2. *Ministers of the gospel have need of sympathy and help in their work.* 3. *The grandest spiritual results are brought about by prayer.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 1. *The Ministerial Request.*

I. **The request presented.**—1. *That the power of religion may be eminently experienced in our own souls.* 2. *That we may be preserved from the official dangers to which we are exposed.* 3. *That we may be able ministers of the New Testament.* 4. *That prudence and fidelity may distinguish our labours.*

II. **The grounds on which it rests.**—1. *It rests on the mutual connection which subsists between ministers and people.* 2. *On the law of love.* 3. *On its advantages to yourselves.* 4. *On the prevalency of fervent prayer.* 5. *On its connection with the salvation of souls.*—*Sketches.*

Ver. 2. *Unbelief*—

I. **Abandons the guide of reason.**

II. **Leads to a vicious life and causes trouble to others.**

III. **We should pray to be delivered from its evil results.**

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

The Faithfulness of God.

From the want of faith in man, referred to in the preceding verse, the writer, as if to show the contrast, naturally glides into the subject of the divine faithfulness. Unbelief may abound, but God can be relied on; man may be fickle and unreasonable, but the fidelity of God is inviolate.

I. **The faithfulness of God is a fact established by abundant testimonies.**—"But the Lord *is* faithful" (ver. 3). He is faithful to His own nature. He cannot deny Himself. He is faithful to His purpose, to His word, to every promise, and every threatening too. The whole history of God's dealings with the Jewish people is a suggestive and impressive commentary on His inflexible faithfulness. The fact that the Church of God exists to-day, notwithstanding defection within and persecution without, is an unanswerable testimony to His fidelity. "You may be faint and weary, but my God cannot. I may fluctuate and alter as to my frames and feelings; but my Redeemer is unchangeably the same. I might utterly fail and come to nothing, if left to myself. But I cannot be so left to myself. He is rich to relieve and succour me in all my wants. He is faithful to perform and perfect all His promises" (*Ambrose Serle*).

II. **The faithfulness of God is practically manifested in establishing His people in all good and in keeping them safe from all evil.**—"Who shall stablish you and keep you from evil" (ver. 3). The people of God do not perpetuate themselves. He perpetuates. His faithful guardianship gives persistency to His people, so that in every age and in the darkest times there has been a bright succession of living witnesses of His unchanging character. He preserves them, not because of any inherent grace or self-deserving, but because He is faithful.

"Janet," said a Scottish minister to a Christian woman of great faith, whom he was visiting, "suppose, after all, God were to let you drop into hell!" "Even as He will," was her reply; "but if He does, He will lose mair than I'll do." A single flaw in the divine fidelity would shatter the faith of the universe.

III. **The faithfulness of God inspires confidence in the fidelity of the obedient.**—"And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do, and will do the things which we command you" (ver. 4). Because God is faithful, we know that you can be kept faithful, if you are willing and seeking to be so kept. Moreover, you will assuredly be kept faithful, while you observe in the future, as you have done in the past, "the things which we command you," and in commanding which we have the divine authority. Consider these things, let them sink into your hearts; then act accordingly. Let obedience follow conviction, and we have no fear about the result. Von Moltke, the great German strategist and general, chose for his motto, "Erst wagen, dann wagen"—"*First weigh, then venture*"; and it was to this he owed his great victories and successes. Slow, cautious, careful in planning, but bold, daring, even seemingly reckless in execution, the moment his resolve was made. Vows thus ripen into deeds, decision must go on to performance. The final perseverance of the saint depends on the divine perseverance; his faithfulness on the divine faithfulness. If we had no living Saviour to pilot our ship, no promise on which to rely, we might have cause to fear. The divine faithfulness is unquestionable; our faithfulness is maintained only by obedience.

Lessons.—1. *The faithfulness of God is the guarantee of the believer's safety.* 2. *The faithfulness of God should encourage the exercise of implicit faith in Him.* 3. *The faithfulness of God demands undeviating obedience to His laws.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 3. *The Divine Faithfulness—*

I. **An incontrovertible fact.**

II. **A guarantee of personal establishment in the truth.**

III. **An invulnerable protection from evil and all its works.**

Ver. 4. *Christian Obedience—*

I. **Is a voluntary and constant activity.**

II. **Is based on well-understood and authoritative precepts.**

III. **Is the pathway of blessing.**

IV. **Inspires confidence in others.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 5.

Divine Love and Patience.

Again the apostle is on his knees. How beautifully the habitual devoutness of the apostle's spirit comes out in the side-lights thrown from passages in his writings like this verse! He lives and breathes in the electric atmosphere of prayer. All the time he is reasoning, expounding, warning, and persuading he is also praying. Prayer is a powerful aid to the preacher. It keeps his soul in sympathy with the realm of spiritual realities, gives him clearer insight into truth, and intensifies his experience of the divine. We learn from this verse:—

I. **That divine love and patience are conspicuous elements in man's redemption.**—"The love of God and the patient waiting for Christ"—*the patience of Christ* (R.V.). The love of God devised and the patience of Christ carried out the great plan of human salvation. The gospel is a grand revelation of the divine love and patience in Christ Jesus; and the history of the gospel in its world-wide progress is a many-sided illustration of these two conspicuous virtues in the divine character and operations. After the last French war the Roman

Catholic Archbishop of Paris was imprisoned. His cell had a window shaped like a cross, and with a pencil he wrote upon the arms of the cross that they denoted the height, length, breadth, and depth of God's love. That man knew something of the love of God. The patience of Christ in suffering for mankind was sustained and sublimated by the love of God, and was an object-lesson to the world, teaching, in a way that appealed to the most callous, the power and universality of that love.

II. **That divine love and patience are the distinguished privilege of human experience.**—"Direct your hearts into the love of God and patience of Christ." The love we are to enjoy is no mere human passion, fickle and evanescent; the patience, no mere grim stoical endurance. We are admitted into the sacred adoption of the divine mysteries; we share in their spiritual ecstasy and unruffled calm, the very love and patience of God! The divine in us becomes more growingly evident to ourselves and to others. Love gives staying-power to and teaches us how to suffer without murmuring, to endure without retaliating. "Sire," said Beza in his reply to the king of Navarre, "it belongs to God's Church rather to suffer blows than to strike them; but let it be your pleasure to remember that the Church is an anvil which has worn out many a hammer." With time and patience the mulberry leaf becomes satin.

III. **That divine love and patience are more fully enjoyed by the soul that prays.**—"And the Lord direct your hearts." The prayerful apostle had realised the blessedness of a personal participation in the love and patience of God. But for the love of God he would never have ventured upon his evangelistic mission, and but for the patience of Christ he would not have continued in it. Now he prays that the hearts of the Thessalonians may enjoy the same grace, or be set in the direct way of attaining it. It is of vital consequence that the current of the heart's outgoings should be set in the right direction. This brief petition shows what we ought to ask for ourselves. The best way to secure a larger degree of love and patience is to ardently pray for them.

"What grace, O Lord, and beauty shone
Around Thy steps below!
What patient love was seen in all
Thy life and death of woe!

"Oh! give us hearts to love like Thee—
Like Thee, O Lord, to grieve
Far more for others' sins, than all
The wrongs that we receive."

Lessons.—1. *The Christian life is a sublime participation in the nature of God.* 2. *Love and patience reveal the God-like character.* 3. *Prayer is at its best when engaged with the loftiest themes.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSE.

Ver. 5. *Waiting for the Second Advent.*

I. **The love of God a preparation for the Redeemer's coming.**—1. *The love of God is the love of goodness.* 2. *The love of God is the love of man expanded and purified.* The love of man expanded into the love of Him, of whom all that we have seen of gentle and lovely, of true and tender, of honourable and bright in human character, are but the shadows and the broken, imperfect lights.

II. **Patient waiting another preparation for the Redeemer's coming.**—1. *The Christian attitude of soul is an attitude of expectation.*—Every gift of noble origin is breathed upon by hope's perfect breath.

2. *It is patient waiting.*—Every one who has ardently longed for any spiritual blessing knows the temptation to impatience in expecting it.—*F. W. Robertson.*

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

Christian Consistency.

The apostle commended with a warm-hearted eulogy whatever was good in the Thessalonians, but he was not less faithful in administering rebuke when it was needed. A number of the converts, not sufficiently pondering the words of the writer, were carried away with the delusion that the second advent of Christ would take place immediately, and they abandoned all interest in the practical duties of life—an error that has been often repeated since, with similar results. Fearing the mischief would spread, and seeing that all previous warnings were disregarded, the apostle in these verses treats the mistaken enthusiasts with unsparing condemnation. Disorder must be crushed and consistency preserved.

I. **Christian consistency is in harmony with the highest teaching.**—"After the tradition which he [or they] received of us" (ver. 6). The rules of Christian consistency were clearly laid down in the traditions or doctrines taught by the apostles, and were enforced with all the weight and sanction of divine authority. To violate these rules is to "walk disorderly"—to break the ranks, to fall out of line. The value of the individual soldier is the degree in which he keeps in order and acts in perfect harmony and precision with the rest of the regiment. A breach of military rule creates disaster. Let the believer keep the divine law, and the law will keep him.

> "The heavens themselves, the planets and this centre,
> Observe degree, priority, and place,
> Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
> Office and custom, in all line of order."
>
> *Shakespeare.*

II. **Christian consistency is enforced by apostolic example.**—"For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you" (ver. 7). The apostles illustrated what they taught, by a rigid observance of the rules they imposed on others. Precept was enforced by practice. While the preachers laboured among the Thessalonians, the influence of their upright examples kept the Church in order. Much depends upon the conduct of a leader in Church or State. It is said of a certain military commander on taking charge of an army that had been somewhat lax in discipline: "The presence of a master-mind was quickly visible in the changed condition of the camp. Perfect order now reigned. He was a rigid disciplinarian, and yet as gentle and kind as a woman. He was the easiest man in our army to get along with pleasantly, so long as one did his duty, but as inexorable as fate in exacting its performance. He was as courteous to the humblest private who sought an interview for any purpose as to the highest officer under his command."

III. **Christian consistency is to be maintained by separation from the lawless.**—"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly" (ver. 6). If all efforts to recover the recalcitrant fail, then the Church has the highest authority for separating completely from the society and fellowship of such. Continued communion with them would not only seem to condone their offence, but destroy discipline, and put an end to all moral consistency. Such a separation from the unruly would be more marked in the early Church, when there was only one Christian community, and when the brethren were noted for their affectionate attachment to each other.

Lessons.—*Christian consistency*—1. *Is defined by the highest law.* 2. *Avoids association with evil.* 3. *Is a reproof and pattern to the unbelieving.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 6, 7. *The Disorderly in Church Life—*

I. **Violate the rules that give compactness and strength to all Church organisation.**

II. **Ignore the highest examples of moral consistency.**

III. **Should be faithfully warned and counselled.**

IV. **If incorrigible, should be excluded from the privileges of Christian fellowship.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—*Verses* 8, 9.

Self-denying Labour.

Pioneer work involves hard toil and much patience and self-denial. The character and surroundings of the people whose highest good is sought must be studied. The apostle took his measure of the Thessalonian converts, and, perhaps foreseeing the extravagances to which they would yield, he and his co-labourers determined to set them an example of unselfish industry, even to the extent of surrendering their just rights.

I. **Here we see self-denying labour carried on amidst weariness and suffering.**—"Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day" (ver. 8). Work is a pleasurable exercise to the strong and healthy, but it becomes a hardship when carried to excess. The devoted missionaries worked when they were weary—worked when they should have been resting. After a hard day's toil in teaching and visiting, they laboured far on into the night, so as to maintain themselves independent of help from their converts. Much as we hear of the dignity of labour, the toiler, whether by hand or brain, in the weariness and pain that overtake him, feels that some portion of the original curse still clings to his handiwork. The best work is often accomplished in the midst of acute suffering. The unique histories of England were written by J. R. Green while the shadow of death was consciously hovering over his desk; and the exquisite Christian lyrics of H. F. Lyte were penned while he felt that every moment his heart was throbbing "funeral marches to the grave."

II. **Here we see self-denying labour declining the maintenance that might be legitimately claimed.**—"That we might not be chargeable to any of you: not because we have not power" (vers. 8, 9)—right, authority. While the apostle forbears to urge their just right to ministerial support by the people, he gives them clearly to understand it is their right. Their self-denial in this instance was for a special purpose, and was only intended to be temporary, and not to establish a universal rule. In other places, St. Paul insists upon the duty of the Church to maintain its ministers (1 Cor. ix. 4-14; Gal. vi 6). All honour to the self-denying zeal and suffering toil of the unaided Christian worker; but what shall we say of the parsimony and injustice of the people who allow such a state of things to continue?

III. **Here we see self-denying labour set forth as an example and reproof to those who are most benefited by it.**—"To make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us" (ver. 9). Here the purpose of their disinterested conduct is plainly stated—to set an example of industry to the idlers. St. Paul acted in a similar manner towards the Corinthians, but with a different design. In the latter case he wished to manifest a better spirit than that of the false teachers who were greedy of filthy lucre (2 Cor. xi. 8-13). The earnest evangelist is ever anxious to clear his work from the taint of self-seeking. Let the heart of man be changed and sanctified, and it will inspire and regulate the practical exercise

of every Christian virtue. How little does the world appreciate its greatest benefactors! And yet no unselfish act is without its recompense. The actor is not unblessed. To exchange, as Christ did, the temple for Nazareth, the Father's house for the carpenter's shop, the joy of preaching for irksome toil, is a great advance in spiritual obedience and nobility of character.

Lessons.—1. *The essence of the Christian spirit is unselfishness.* 2. *The earnest Christian pioneer labours ungrudgingly for the good of others.* 3. *The self-denial of the preacher does not exonerate the people from the duty of his legitimate maintenance.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 8. *Industry the Secret of Success.*—When Sir Isaac Newton was asked by what means he had been able to make that successful progress in the sciences which struck mankind with wonder, he modestly replied, that it was not so much owing to any superior strength of genius as to a habit of patient thinking, laborious attention, and close application.

Ver. 9. *Ministerial Maintenance.*

I. **Is a claim based on scriptural and apostolic authority.**

II. **The temporary waiving of the right is a noble example of self-denial and unselfish devotion.**

III. **No personal waiving of the right releases the Church from its obligation.**

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 10—12.

Christianity and Work.

Christianity is the gospel of work. Its clarion-call thrills along the nerves of human life and summons the world to labour. It gives to work meaning, purpose, dignity, and exalts drudgery into a blessedness. While full of sympathy for the feeble and maimed, it has no pity for the indolent. Its Founder and first apostles were giants in labour, and their example animates the world to-day with a spirit of noblest activity. It is not the drone, but the worker, who blesses the world. "Be no longer a chaos," writes Carlyle, "but a world, or even a worldkin. Produce! produce! were it but the pitifullest, infinitesimal fraction of a product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee; out with it, then. Up, up! whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

I. **Christianity recognises the duty of every man to work for his own support.**—"For even when we were with you, this we commanded, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (ver. 10). The necessity of food involves the necessity of work. As every one must eat, so every one must work. The wife of a certain chieftain, who had fallen upon idle habits, one day lifted the dish-cover at dinner and revealed a pair of spurs, a sign that he must ride and hunt for his next meal. It is said that in the Californian bee-pastures, on the sun-days of summer, one may readily infer the time of day from the comparative energy of bee-movements alone; drowsy and moderate in the cool of the morning, increasing in energy with the ascending sun, and at high noon thrilling and quivering in wild ecstasy, then gradually declining again to the stillness of night. Is not this a picture of our life? Work is necessary for sustenance, for health, for moral development; and rest is all the sweeter after genuine toil.

II. **Christianity is intolerant of an ignoble indolence.**—"For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies" (ver. 11). The disorderly are the idle tatlers, who make a pretence

of work by busying themselves with all kinds of things but their own duty. They are triflers, wasting their own time and other people's; and they do serious mischief. In certain foreign parts, where insects abound in such swarms as to be a pest to the people and destructive enemies to young growing plants, an electric apparatus has been constructed to destroy the brood wholesale. The appliance consists of a strong electric light attracting the moths and insects, a suction-fan drawing them into a shaft as they approach the light, and a small mill in the shaft where the victims are ground up and mixed with flour, thus converting them into poultry-food. Cannot some genius contrive a means of putting an end—short of grinding them into chicken-food: let us be merciful, even to our enemies!—to those social pests who go buzzing about our homes and Churches, worrying with their idle gossip and stinging with their spiteful venom the innocent and inoffensive? If these busybodies would devote, in doing their duty, the energy they waste, they would be able to produce quite a respectable amount of honest work. But they find it easier to sponge on the generosity and simplicity of others. They are parasites; and all parasites are the paupers of nature. Parasitism is a crime—a breach of the law of evolution.

III. **Christianity enforces the necessity of a steady and independent industry.** —"We command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (ver. 12). The apostle, having the authority of Christ for what he counsels, *commands*; and as a man addressing his fellow-men, he *exhorts* and persuades. The law of Christianity is both stern and gentle: unbending in principle, and flexible only in manifold persuasions to translate the principle into actual living practice. It rouses man from yielding to a sinful listlessness and helps him to develop a robust Christian manhood. When an Indian candidate for the ministry was asked the question, "What is original sin?" he frankly replied, "He did not know what other people's might be, but he rather thought that his was laziness." Idleness is the prolific source of many evils: work is at once a remedy and a safeguard. A clergyman once said, "A Christian should never plead spirituality for being a sloven; if he be but a shoe-cleaner, he should be the best in the parish." We are honouring Christianity most when we are doing our best to observe its precepts, "Working with quietness and eating our own bread." An American preacher once said, "You sit here and sing yourselves away to everlasting bliss; but I tell you that you are wanted a great deal more out in Illinois than you are in heaven."

Lessons.—1. *Christianity encourages and honours honest toil.* 2. *Fearlessly denounces unprincipled idlers.* 3. *Is an inspiration to the highest kind of work.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

er. 10. *Industry the True Charity.* —When the palace and church buildings of Caprarolo were completed, Borromeo, the great patron of idle almsgiving, came to see it, and complained that so much money had not been given to the poor instead. "I have let them have it all little by little," said Alexandro Farnese; "but I have made them earn it by the sweat of their brow."

Ver. 11. *Idleness and Death.*—Ælian mentions a witticism of Alcibiades when some one was vaunting to him about the contempt the Lacedæmonians had for death. "It is no wonder," said he, "since it relieves them from the heavy burden of an idle and stupid life."

Ver. 12. *The Way to Value Quietness.* —"How dull and quiet everything is. There isn't a leaf stirring," said a young sparrow perched on the bough of a willow tree. "How delicious a

puff of wind would be!" "We shall have one before long," croaked an old raven; "more than you want, I fancy." Before many hours a tempest swept over the country, and in the morning the fields were strewn with its ravages. "What a comfort the storm is over," said the sparrow, as he trimmed his wet feathers. "Ah!" croaked the raven, "you've altered your mind since last night. Take my word for it, there's nothing like a storm to teach you to value a calm."—*G. Eliot.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF VERSE 13.

A Call to do the Best Work.

The apostle has shown the necessity and duty of work—that honest industry is a law of Christianity. Now he inculcates unwearied diligence in accomplishing the best work, designated by the comprehensive and suggestive phrase "well-doing." Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well. No man has done his best till he has done all he can. A man's highest work is the outcome of his best endeavours. Observe:—

I. **Doing the best work is well-doing.**—"Be not weary in well-doing." We may define to ourselves this duty of well-doing by seeking answers to two questions:—

1. *How can I get the most good?*—The ancient philosophers discussed the question of the supreme good with amazing subtlety of logic; but they started their investigations with the erroneous assumption that the supreme good must be a human product. The question is not how to get good, but the most good—the highest, the best. We get the most good by bringing the soul into complete submission to the highest law of its being—voluntary and full surrender to the will of God. Call it getting saved, getting converted; call it what you like, so long as you get the thing itself—the love of God in the soul through faith in the Lord Jesus.

2. *How can I do the most good?*—These two questions are closely linked together, and are mutually interpretative of each other—the one being the qualification and motive for the other. It may be asserted we get the most good by doing the most good. The rose cannot diffuse the fragrance it does not possess, however much like a rose it may look. The question here, again, is not how I can do good, but the most, the highest, and best. We do the most good by beginning with the duty that lies nearest to us, and doing it at once. The earnest worker never lacks opportunity: there is the home, the Church, the perishing multitude, ever within easy reach. "He that winneth souls is wise." The highest plaudit of heaven is, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

II. **The best work is not done without encountering difficulties.**—"Be not weary." The exhortation implies there are difficulties. These arise:—

1. *From vague and imperfect views of duty.*—We have no sympathy with the rhapsody of the mystic who said, "Man is never so holy and exalted as when he does not know where he is going." We must know clearly what we would be at, what is within the compass of our power and opportunity, where our efforts must necessarily end, and room left for the play of other influences. We must be practical and methodical. Clearness is power. Confusion of ideas creates difficulties.

2. *From unrealised ideals.*—We have formed lofty conceptions of what is to be done, and what we must do. We have elaborated extensive organisations, and worked them with unflagging zeal. But the result has been disappointing. Because we have not accomplished all we wished, we are discouraged; our success has not been commensurate with our ambition, and we are tempted to

slacken our endeavours. "Be not weary." We are not the best judges of what constitutes success. If it does not come in the form we expected, we must not hastily conclude our work is vain.

3. *From the loss of spiritual power.*—We have neglected prayer and the cultivation of personal piety. We have been so absorbed in the external details of our work as to overlook the duty of keeping up spiritual communion with the highest. We begin to frame excuses—a sure sign of moral decadence. "We have no talents." Then we should seek them. We have more talents that we suspect, and resolute working will develop them. "Our adversaries are numerous and fierce." If we keep at our work, they will not trouble us long.

III. **The best work demands incessant diligence.**—"But ye, brethren, be not weary in well-doing." The best state of preparedness for the coming of the Lord is to be busily employed in the duty of the hour. Every moment has its duty. Opportunity has hair in front; behind she is bald. If you seize her by the forelock, you may hold her; but if suffered to escape, not Jupiter himself can catch her again. Arnauld, the Port Royalist, when hunted from place to place, wished his friend Nicolle to assist him in a new work, when the latter observed, "We are old; is it not time to rest?" "Rest!" returned Arnauld. "Have we not all eternity to rest in?" A man's work does not ennoble him, but he ennobles it.

Lessons.—*The text is a spiritual motto to be adopted*—1. *By ministers and Sabbath-school teachers.* 2. *By parents seeking the spiritual good of their children.* 3. *By all discouraged Christian workers.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSE.

Weary in Well-doing.

I. **The text by implication brings before us a state of mind to which believers are liable.**—"Weary in well-doing." 1. *From a lamentable want of fitness for spiritual duties and employments.* 2. *From the opposition of the world.* 3. *From the hostile agency of spiritual wickedness.* 4. *From the dimness of our conceptions of the things which should especially influence us.* 5. *From failing to lay hold on the divine strength.*

II. **The text an exhortation suited to those in the state referred to.**—"Be not weary." 1. *Because you are engaged in well-doing.* 2. *Because the time is short.* 3. *Because your associates are glorious.* 4. *Because the issue is certain.* 5. *Because sufficient strength is provided.*—*Stewart.*

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

Treatment of the Refractory.

After all the warnings of the apostle against erroneous views and his exhortations to Christian diligence, he foresees there may be some refractory members of the Church who still persist in their extravagances, reject all counsel, and defy all rule and order. In these verses he gives explicit directions how to deal with such. The inveterately lazy are often something worse than lazy, and are not easily reclaimed. When disobedience settles into a habit, stringent measures are necessary to arouse the victim to a sense of duty; and the efforts of restoration must be both resolute and kind.

I. **It should be made evident that his conduct is an obstinate defiance of authority.**—"And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man" (ver. 14). Not only note that his disorderly behaviour is a scandal to Christianity

and an example to be avoided, but let it be brought home to him, by direct and faithful dealing, that it is a grave breach of the highest law. We can make nothing of a fool till he is first convinced of his folly. The first step in the process of reformation is conviction of the need of reformation. It is said of Thoreau, the author, that "he was by nature of the opposition; there was a constitutional 'No' in him that could not be tortured into 'Yes.'" There are many like him, even in the Christian Church. It may seem a difficult, almost an impossible task, to convince the refractory of his error; but it is the first thing to be done, and persevered in. When the hearers of Austin resented his reproofs, he used to say, "Change your conduct, and I will change my conversation."

II. **With the view of bringing him to repentance he is to be excluded from Christian fellowship.**—"And have no company with him, that he may be ashamed" (ver. 14). The refractory practically excludes himself from every circle that loves order, harmony, and peace; for who can bear the rasping chatter of an irresponsible gossip who is constantly raking up and turning over everybody's faults but his own? But the Church must take action unitedly in dealing with the contumacious. He must be deliberately and pointedly shunned, and, when compelled to be in his company, the members must show, by the reserve of their bearing towards him, how deeply he is grieving the hearts of the brethren and sinning against God. In the days when there was only one Church, and exclusion from it was regarded as the greatest calamity and disgrace, the fear of utter excommunication could not fail to have some effect upon those thus threatened with it. Few people can bear the test of being left severely alone. It gives them the opportunity for reflection, remorse, and reform.

III. **Efforts should be made in the spirit of Christian brotherhood to effect his recovery.**—"Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother" (ver. 15). Though shunned and threatened with exclusion from Church fellowship, he is not to be passed by with contemptuous silence. He is not a heretic or a blasphemer, nor is he guilty of any monstrous crime. He is sinning against the good order of society and the peace of the Church. He is still a brother, troublesome and unreasonable though he be; and while there is the least hope of his restoration, he should be faithfully admonished. He is not to be accused and slandered to outsiders; this will only aggravate his riotousness and make him more defiant. He must be seen privately and spoken to faithfully, but with the utmost tenderness. The Christian spirit teaches us to be discreet in all things, and especially in administering reproof. Virtue ceases to be virtuous when it lacks discretion, the queen of ethics. "To be plain," writes Fellthan, "argues honesty; but to be pleasing argues discretion. Sores are not to oe anguished with rustic pressure, but gently stroked with a ladied hand. Physicians fire not their eyes at patients, but minister to their diseases. Let reproof be so as the offender may see affection, without arrogancy."

Lessons.—1. *It is an important part of Church discipline to control the unruly.* 2. *It is in the power of one discontented person to work much mischief.* 3. *Church discipline must be administered with fidelity and Christian tenderness.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Vers. 14, 15. *The Disobedient—*

I. **Should be specially noted.**

II. **Should not be admitted to intimate friendship without repentance.**

III. **Should be kindly but faithfully admonished.**

Ver. 14. *Obedience should be prompt.*—When a large passenger steamer was sinking, the question whether scores of her passengers and crew would be saved or drowned was settled within fifteen minutes. And millions have decided

the momentous question of their eternal salvation or perdition in even less time than that. It seems to have been short work with Simon Peter when Jesus bade him quit the nets and follow Him. Peter obeyed at once. Prompt obedience honours God. It puts the soul immediately within the Almighty's hold; and when Jesus has His omnipotent grasp of love upon me, none shall be able to pluck me out of His hands. Prompt obedience saves.—*Cuyler.*

MAIN HOMILETICS OF THE PARAGRAPH.—Verses 16—18.

Apostolic Courtesy.

The epistle is coming to a close, and the Christian courtesy of the apostle comes out in the spirit in which he expresses his farewell. If he has spoken out plainly and even severely, it has not been in vindictiveness and anger. All that he has said and written is in the interests of peace. His sharpest reproofs and most faithful admonitions have been suffused with an undercurrent of loving-kindness; and his concluding words drop with the gentleness of refreshing dew.

I. **Apostolic courtesy supplicates the blessing of the divine peace and presence.**—"Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all" (ver. 16). Prayer was the life-breath of the apostle, as we have frequently pointed out in the study of these epistles. Considering the dissensions that disturbed the harmony of the Thessalonian Church, this epistle appropriately closes with a prayer for peace. First, and most important of all, peace with God and the individual conscience; then mutual peace and concord one with another—peace, such as keeps the mind in an even and heavenly frame, as a sentinel that guards a door, lest foes should get in and make havoc where God hath commanded peace. Where God's presence is manifested, there is peace; hence the apostle adds, "The Lord be with you all." Peace is a divine gift, and a divine experience in man; it is the peace of "the Lord of peace" that we share.

II. **Apostolic courtesy is expressed in an emphatic Christian salutation.**—"The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write" (ver. 17). This epistle was written by an amanuensis, probably Silas or Timothy, at the dictation of Paul; and the apostle wrote his own signature, adding the salutation and benediction. This act not only stamped the genuineness of the epistle, but indicated in a most unmistakable manner the anxiety of the apostle to thoroughly identify himself with all that was expressed in the epistle, and to assure the Thessalonians of his personal interest in and love towards them. Christianity is the soul of courtesy. Bolingbroke once said, "Supposing Christianity to be a mere human invention, it is the most amiable and successful invention that ever was imposed on mankind." When the courtiers of Henry IV. of France expressed their surprise that he returned the salutation of a poor man, who bowed down before him at the entrance of a village, the king replied, "Would you have your king exceeded in politeness by one of the lowest of his subjects?" As he is the best Christian who is most humble, so is he the truest gentleman that is most courteous.

III. **Apostolic courtesy is indicated in the solemn invocation of the abiding grace of God.**—"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen" (ver. 18). A farewell full of pathos, full of solemnity, full of peace, full of admiration and love for the people—all good wishes condensed into a single phrase. Even an apostle can desire for the Church, or any of its members, no richer benediction than that comprehended in "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Lessons.—1. *Peace is a prime essential in Church prosperity.* 2. *The Christian spirit is the essence of true courtesy.* 3. *We can invoke no higher blessing on others than to be kept in the enjoyment of divine grace.*

GERM NOTES ON THE VERSES.

Ver. 16. *The Omnipresent God—*

I. **In history.**—Shaping the course and destiny of nations.

II. **In providence.** — 1. *Guarding.* 2. *Guiding His people.*

III. **In grace.**—1. *Manifesting His goodness in Christ.* 2. *Giving inclination and power to do His will.* 3. *Demanding and bestowing personal holiness.* 4. *Ensuring constant peace.*

Peace in Danger.—During the great earthquake in London, when thousands were running about and crying in terror, when buildings were falling and the ground rocking like the ocean in a storm, Wesley gathered a few of his followers in one of their little chapels, and calmly read to them the forty-sixth psalm, "God is our refuge and strength."

Vers. 17, 18. *Christian Courtesy—*

I. **Takes pains to make itself evident.**—"So I write."

II. **Is a hearty expression of personal regard.**—"The salutation of Paul with mine own hand."

III. **Invokes the blessing of divine grace on all** (ver. 18).

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